The Totem Poles and Monuments of Gitwangak Village

George F. MacDonald

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Cover: The figure of Nekt on Man-crushing Log (pole 19). The warrior is in his grizzly-bear disguise and holding the magical club Strike-Only-Once. (National Museums of Canada, 64306.)

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George F. MacDonald

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Contents

5 Précis
7 Preface
9 Introduction

11 **Part One** A Photographic Survey of Gitwangak Village

25 **Part Two** An Account of the Potlatches of Hlengwah

31 **Part Three** The Totem Poles and Monuments at Gitwangak Village
37 Man-in-the Copper-Shield (No. 1)
41 Frogs-Hanging-Down (No. 2)
47 Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (No. 3)
51 Man-Cut-in-Half (No. 4)
53 Pole of the Mountain Lion (No. 5)
59 Ensnared Bear (No. 6)
63 Pole of the Wolf (No. 7)
67 Half-Bear (No. 8)
73 Bear's-Den-Person (No. 9)
77 Dog Salmon (No. 10)
83 On-Top-Sits-the-Squirrel (No. 11)
89 Halibut (No. 12)
95 Man-crushing Log (No. 13)
103 Drum-Hangs-On (No. 14)
105 Thunderbird (No. 15)
109 Whereon-Climb-Frogs (No. 16)
113 On-Which-Soars-Raven (No. 17)
117 Monument of the Mountain Lion (No. 18)
119 Man-crushing Log (Tongue-licked [Nekt] II) (No. 19)
125 Tongue-licked (Nekt) I (No. 20)
129 Tongue-licked (Nekt) III (No. 21)
131 The House Posts of Hlengwah
  134 Frog (No. 22)
  134 Putting-a-Soul-on-Oneself (No. 23)
  135 Kitimat Warrior (No. 24)
  135 Whole-Being (No. 25)
137 New Whereon-Climb-Frogs (No. 26)
139 Bear Mother (No. 27)
141 Bear's Den (No. 28)
143 Monument of the Crab (No. 29)
145 Monument to Kitwinkul Jim (Kamalmuk) (No. 30)
147 Monument to John Laganitz (No. 31)
149 Monument to Ne-tzees-an-awask, Susan Ne-yas-ha-lon-passt and Amelia Ne.aweh (No. 32)
151 Monument of the Flying Frog (No. 33)
153 Monument to Lutraisu and Nekt (No. 34)
155 Other Monuments

157 Appendix A. Gitwangak (Gitksan Village IV) Houses and Phratries.
159 Bibliography

Précis

Le village indien gitksan de Gitwangak est le village totémique le mieux connu de la côte nord-ouest. Ce village est situé en bordure de la rivière Skeena, dans le nord de la Colombie-Britannique, à proximité d'un fort gitksan construit au sommet d'une colline. Le fort a été détruit dans les années 1830. Les mâts totémiques érigés entre 1840 et 1942 constituent des vestiges inestimables qui nous renseignent sur l'histoire du fort Kitwanga et des familles qui y ont vécu.

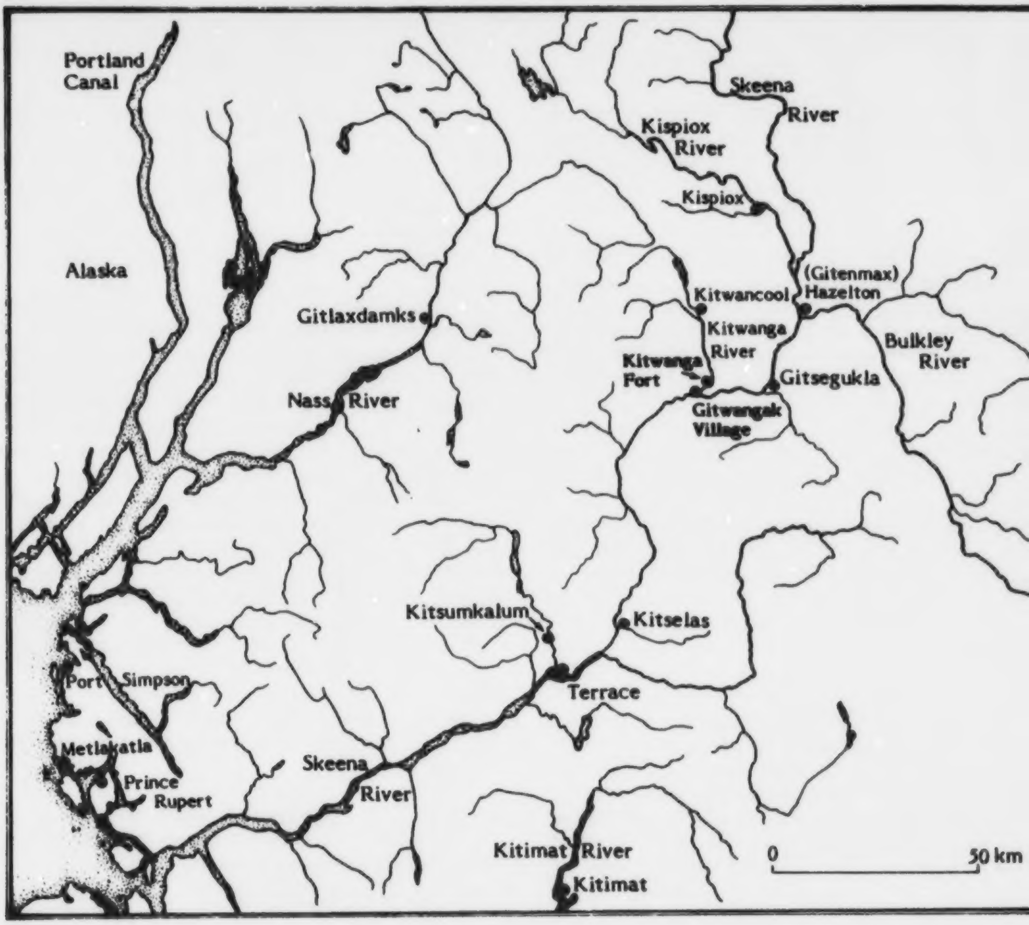
Preface

The Kitwanga fort on the Skeena River in northern British Columbia was declared a national historic site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 1971. In 1979, as part of a joint Parks Canada--National Museum of Man project, I conducted test excavations at the site and interviewed people from the nearby village of Gitwangak concerning the ethnohistory of the site. Many of the informants called attention again and again to the fact that episodes in the stories they recounted were illustrated in the carvings on the totem poles that lined the main street of Gitwangak Village. I photographed the poles and began to research the history of the poles more extensively when I returned to Ottawa that fall.

To my delight I discovered that Gitwangak is the best-documented totem village on the Northwest Coast. The National Museum of Man files contain more than 500 photographs of the poles there, taken between 1899 and the present. The earliest records come from federal government surveys such as the 1899 survey for railway routes to the Pacific by J. O'Dwyer of the Ministry of Transport. Lieutenant G.T. Emmons of the United States Navy made several trips to Gitwangak between 1905 and 1910, when he photographed the chiefs and medicine men of the village, as well as photographing the poles and recording their histories. Dr. Charles F. Newcombe of Victoria made several collecting and recording trips to Gitwangak at the same time. In 1915 the National Museums of Canada sent Harlan I. Smith to the Skeena River. He took a particularly good set of photographs of Gitwangak at that time, many of which appear in this report. Three years later the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania sent Louis Shotridge, a Tlingit chief, to photograph and record the people of Gitwangak.

As a result of these surveys, Gitwangak was chosen by Harlan I. Smith and Marius Barbeau of the National Museums of Canada for an extensive totem pole restoration project from 1924 to 1926, funded in part by the Canadian National Railway, which saw the tourist potential in the totems of Gitwangak. The restoration project accomplished two important aims. It compiled detailed reports on the totem poles at a time when the Gitksan chiefs who had participated in the traditional culture were still available. Its second achievement was to stabilize and restore the poles, adding at least 50 to 75 years to their life spans. Gitwangak has the most extensive collection of old totem poles of any village in British Columbia, with the exception of Kitwancool.

Submitted for publication 1980, by George F. MacDonald, National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, Ottawa.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Gitlaxdamks
Nass River
Skeena River
Kispiox River
Kispiox
(Gitenmax) Hazelton
Kitwancool
Kitwanga River
Kitwanga Fort
Gitsegukla
Gitwangak Village
Bulkley River
Kitsumkalum
Kitselas
Terrace
Port Simpson
Metlakatla
Prince Rupert
Skeena River
Kitimat River
Kitimat
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50 km

1 Location of Kitwanga Fort National Historic Site and Gitwangak Village, northern British Columbia. (Map by D. Kappler.)

Introduction

The Gitksan are a collectivity of village-based tribes who speak a Tsimshian language. Their village of Gitwangak lies on the northern bank of the Skeena River in northern British Columbia, near the site of the Kitwanga Taawdzep or hill fort. The fort was located on a small, steep hill overlooking both the Kitwanga River and the Kitwancool trail that followed the Skeena and Kitwanga rivers to reach the upper Nass River. The Kitwancool trail was one of the most important of the many "grease trails" throughout northern British Columbia and Alaska, paths on which eulachon (candlefish) oil was carried from the fisheries on various rivers, particularly the Nass, to the villages. Chiefs owned the rights to use the trails, but such rights were not a great source of wealth until intertribal trade in iron and copper developed in the late 17th century. The control of trade then became increasingly important and contested, and forts began to appear along the trails.

Legend says that the warrior Nekt built the Kitwanga fort. His mother, Lutraisu, was a high-ranking Gitksan woman who had been captured by the Haida and married to a Haida chief named Kewok (Bullhead). Not long after her son was born, Lutraisu decapitated Kewok while the chief slept and fled back to the mainland, taking the chief's head as a trophy. Unable to handle the canoe and nurse her son at the same time, she cut Kewok's tongue out and gave it to the boy as a pacifier. The act gave the boy his name: Nekt (Tongue-licked). Nekt was so violent and disruptive as a youth that his Nisgha uncles expelled him and his mother from the village. Nekt wandered in the forest for some time, then joined a group of families who were the ancestors of the Gitwangak tribe. Protected by his slate-lined bearskin armour, he raided coastal and river settlements, and he built the Kitwanga fort as a stronghold. He was guided by a dream that had showed him how to defend the fort with large spiked logs suspended horizontally from a palisade by cedar ropes so the logs could be swiftly cut loose to roll down the hill onto attackers. His dream also revealed how to dig underground hiding places reached by trap doors in the houses and connected to escape tunnels under the palisade. It is said that Nekt's enemies finally shot and killed him with the first gun brought into the area, after which they destroyed the fort.

Archaeological work indicates that at the peak of its development the Kitwanga fort had been in use for at least a century and incorporated five houses which were enclosed by a palisade. The houses were typical Gitksan plank structures, but they contained unusual features. Beneath them, once covered by floor planks, were found large pits that had served as food storage areas and shallower pits, near the rear walls, that had offered hiding places and escape routes. Dates obtained by analysis of tree rings on charcoal from the site suggest that the fort was burned and abandoned around 1835.

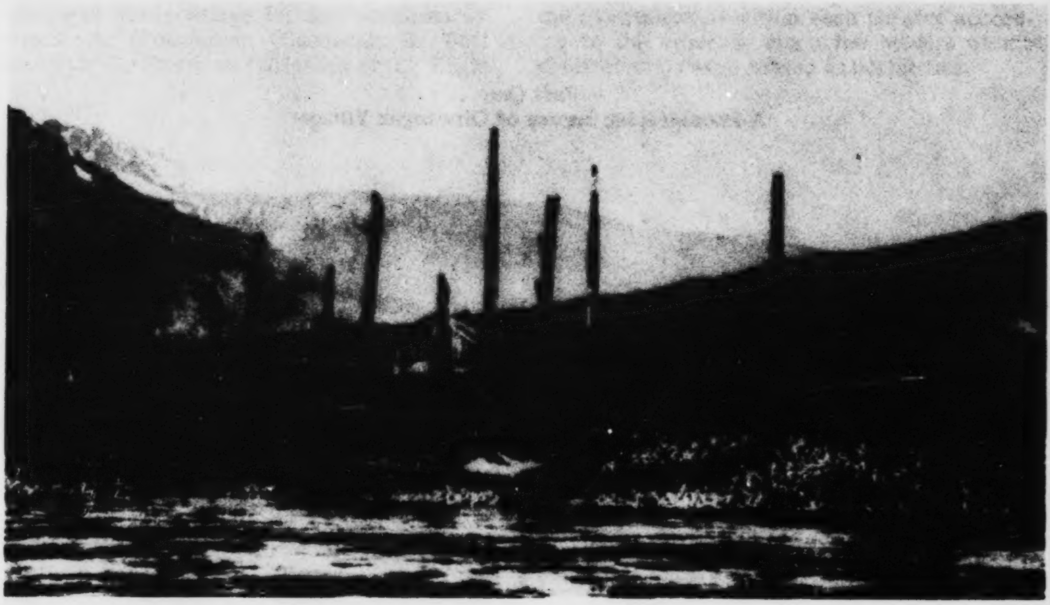
After abandoning the fort, its former inhabitants briefly moved to another village before moving to the site of the present-day village of Gitwangak. The monuments in the village were erected between 1840 and 1942. Each pertains directly to the families that inhabited the Kitwanga fort. The history of the warrior Nekt and his Frog-Raven (Ganhada) clan chief, Hlengwah (Earthquake; IV.A.1), along with Qawq (IV.D.1), the chief of both the fort and later the village, are the major themes found on the poles at Gitwangak. At least half the monuments portray crests associated with Nekt alone. Virtually all major episodes or symbols of Nekt's activities are depicted on the poles, including his acquisition of the grizzly-bear suit of armour; his magical war club, Strike-Only-Once; his flying-frog helmet; the thunderbird crest, Giludal, that he captured from Kitimat Village; the Kitimat warriors in conical hats; the trap door to his fort; and the enemies he killed, called "Halfway-Out" and "Man-Cut-in-Half."

The Gitwangak totem poles represent a surviving group of what might be considered both as artifacts and as structures because of their scale. In their own way they have kept the history of the Kitwanga fort alive in the minds of the descendants of the families who once lived there.

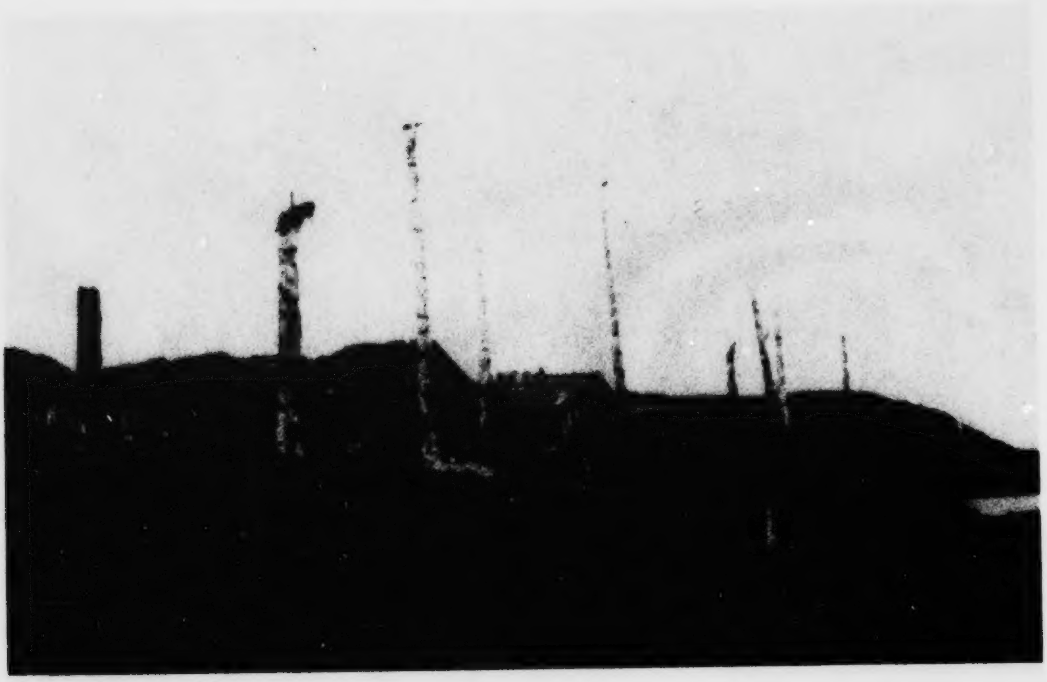
The codes that appear in parentheses after various names identify the hereditary chieftainships of the Gitksan (see Appendix A).

Villages are designated by roman numerals, Gitwangak being village IV, and phratries by letters: A, Frog-Raven (Ganhada); B, Wolf (Laxkibu); C, Fireweed (Gisgast); or D, Eagle (Laxskik). Arabic numbers give the ranking of the chieftainships within each phratry according to the order in which the holders of the chieftainships were seated at potlatches.

Part One
A Photographic Survey of Gitwangak Village



2 Panorama from the north end of Gitwangak Village, Skeena River, British Columbia, showing the poles standing along the riverbank in 1899. (Photo by J. O'Dwyer; Public Archives Canada, 83119.)



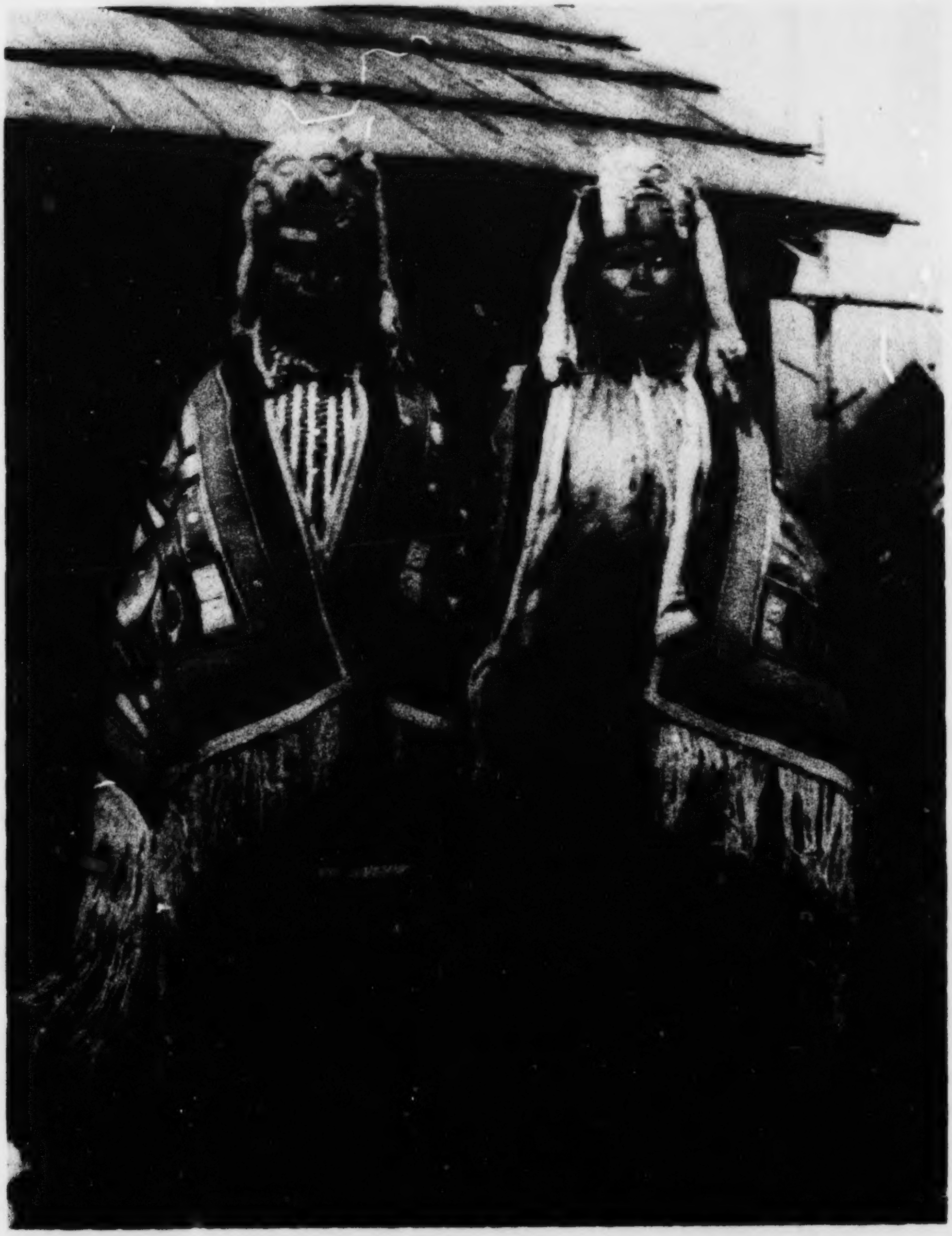
3 Panorama from the south end of Gitwangak Village, circa 1899. (Photographer unknown; National Museums of Canada, 72-9186.)

4 Two Gitwangak chiefs of the Frog-Raven phratry, circa 1905. On the right is Nekt (IV.A.la) in a grizzly-bear robe (compare with Figure 33, taken 20 years later, in J. MacDonald's report [1980].) It is probably Chief Lelt (IV.A.4) on the left. (Photographer unknown; courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN12773.)

5 A 1903 photograph of Semedik (IV.D.1a) and his wife of the Eagle phratry. Semedik was the head chief of the village of Gitwangak. On the right, wearing Semedik's painted tunic, is a man identified only as Dennis. (Photographer unknown; courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN3836.)

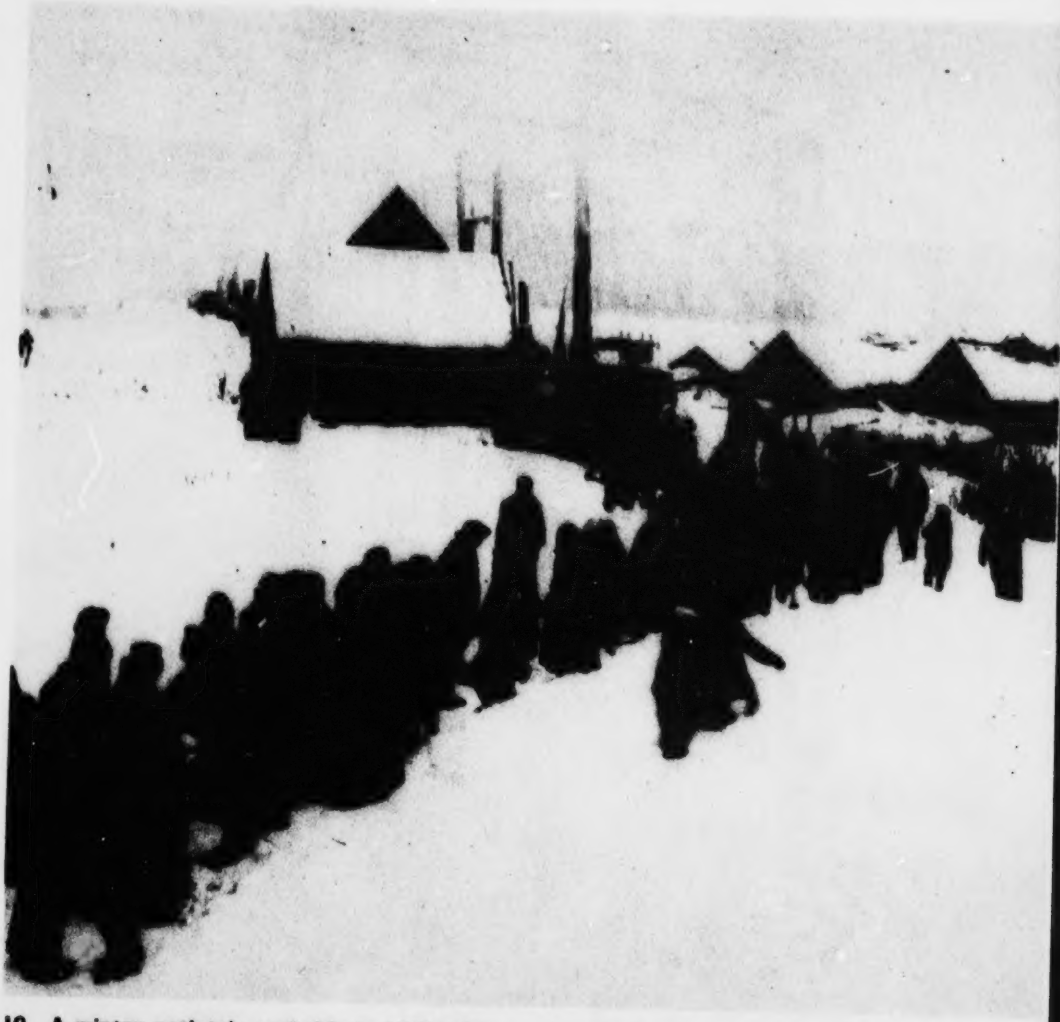
6 When Lt. G.T. Emmons visited Gitwangak in 1910, the pole Bear's-Den-Person (No. 9, on the left), raised shortly after the move from the fortress to Gitwangak, was still standing. (National Museums of Canada, 71-5709.)

7 Emmons was able to record many of the Gitwangak chiefs and even a medicine man performing a curing ceremony during his 1910 visit. (National Museums of Canada, 71-5571.)



8 Two Gitwangak women of the Eagle phratry in regalia. The eagle forehead mask on the left belongs to Chief Šemedik. The woman on the right is Semedik's wife. (Photo by Lt. G.T. Emmons, 1910; National Museums of Canada, 71-5561.)

9 Gitwangak totem poles as they appeared during Harlan I. Smith's survey for the National Museums of Canada in 1915. (National Museums of Canada, 34596.)

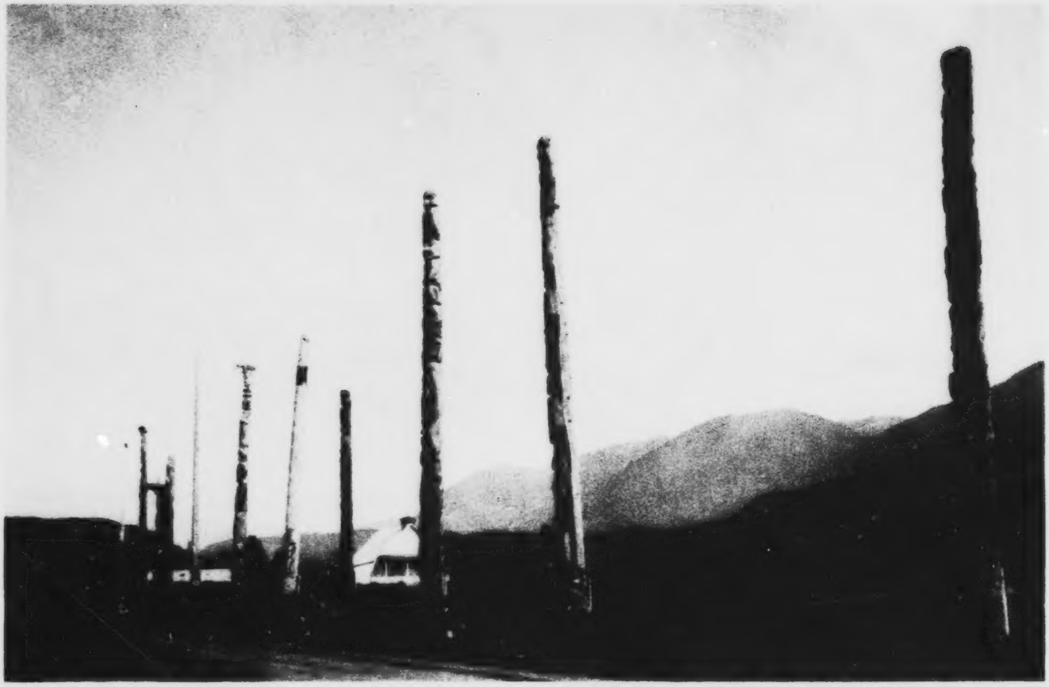


10 A winter potlatch, probably in 1918, when Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (pole 1) was raised. The people are holding the hoisting rope that is attached to the pole lying on the ground. (Public Archives Canada, 45137.)

11 As the joint totem pole restoration project of the National Museums of Canada and the Canadian National Railway neared completion in the fall of 1926, most of the poles had been repainted and re-erected on their original bases near the riverbank. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1926; National Museums of Canada, 71-4419.)

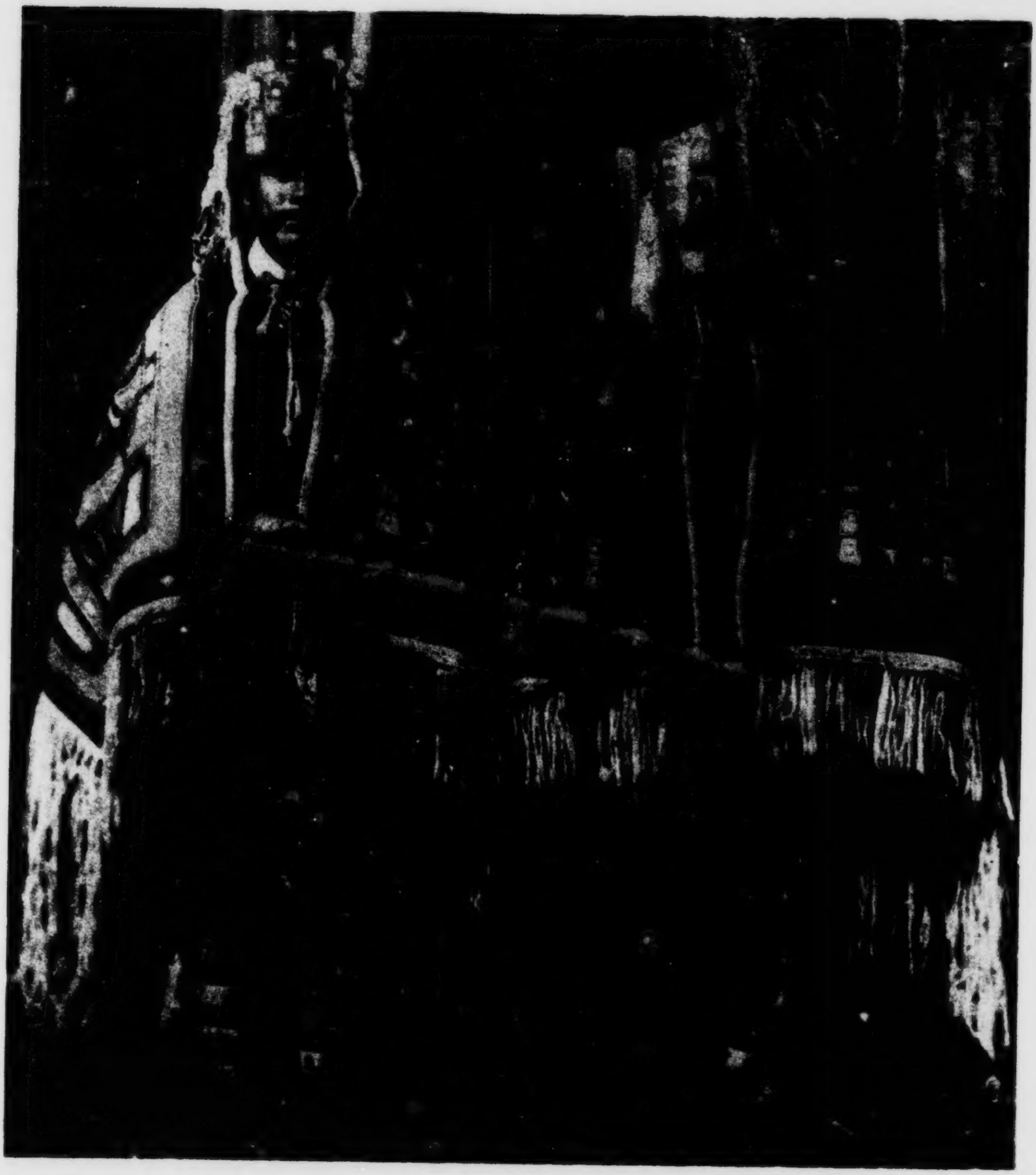
12 The Gitwangak poles became a major tourist attraction along the Canadian National line before tourism was curtailed by World War II. After the war, tourism shifted from the train to the automobile. The Yellowhead Highway was built on the opposite side of the Skeena River and tourists neglected Gitwangak until the new bridge link was installed. (Early 1930s; courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN8370.)

13 During the period of World War II, poles were still being raised to commemorate the fortress history along the main street of Gitwangak. (1947; Tourism British Columbia, G 3779.)



14 The totem poles of Gitwangak as they appeared in 1978 after restoration in 1969 by the Skeena River Totem Pole Restoration Society and the British Columbia Provincial Museum, under the direction of Phillip Ward. (Tourism British Columbia, 40498.)

Part Two
An Account of the Potlatches of Hlengwah



15 Chief Hlengwah on the left. The boy (wearing the blanket Hlengwah wears in other photos) is probably his son who died in 1916. (Circa 1900; Public Archives Canada, Wrathal Collection.)

When at Gitwangak in 1924, Marius Barbeau recorded an account by Jim Laganitz -- Chief Hlengwah (Earthquake; IV.A.1) of the Frog-Raven (Ganhada) phratry -- of the potlatches he had given. The interpreter was Albert Sinclair. (Canada. National Museums. National Museum of Man. Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. Marius Barbeau Collection, File No. B-F-54.6.)

[1st potlatch]

[I began to] potlatch ... when one of my brothers fell down on the mountâins and [was] killed. His name was nidamlaxâtz. [I held the potlatch] when I came back.... I [distributed] one bundle of blankets and one [or two] boxful of blankets.... [I] gave them away at a potlatch. It was in the feast given by others. I was hallait [*sic*] at the same time as I gave the blankets. ["Halait" may refer to sacred dances, the performer, the song accompanying the dance, and the house where the ceremony is performed.] I started at the same time to give potlatch.

2nd potlatch

Another time I gave another potlatch when my uncle ʼnieswé.it was drowned in the river. I was hallait at that potlatch. I gave some goods and food [to] the people. This is what we call yuku.

3rd potlatch

I gave [this potlatch] when my mother drowned in the river. She had taken the name of my brother who had fallen [on] the mountain and killed himself, she had his name [Nidamlaxâtz]. I was hallait and I gave some goods and food to the people. And we gave presents to all the chiefs [attending] from outside also. A yuku was [held] for all the people of the different tribes.

4th potlatch

It was when my ... other brother [Tibon -- "Sea Lion"] capsized in the river.... and was drowned with my sister and a little baby. They were drowned coming from minokinist in the fall. The water [was] pretty high. They capsized when coming up [river].

Others

I made a big potlatch when my brother capsized; I had given much money in this potlatch. And what money was left I sent to the chiefs of the Nass River. I made a yuku each time one of my family died. Every time.

[1st] Totem Pole

We [erected] a totem pole while my uncles lived. It is rotten already and has fallen down. The carver [was] hasəmtyɔn. He was a good carver from Gitwinkool (Ganhada). It was the same figures as on the next and the posts inside the house here. A high pole and all the crests were carved on it.

And when the pole was rotten it fell down and he had a new one made. And the same ayuks [crests] were carved on the pole. I was not very young when it fell, very long before the Gamoxmelmux.

2nd pole

We made another pole quite a number of years after that and we called another man to carve it. He was té.sax (laxkibu Gitwintkul). Paid a good amount for it. We gave him 100 good [Hudson's Bay] blankets [worth] $3 each blanket. Some women helped [with the] payment. They gave some calico several fathoms and some other [yard] goods. We spend money also. It was very expensive. And much money was spent when the pole was put up, $400. or $500. worth of food. Not money at that time,

16 Chief Hlengwah standing in front of his house at a potlatch for one of his deceased relatives. The banner over the door indicates the death of a family member. (Courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN3831.)

but goods and food. The food and goods altogether would amount to more than 1000 or 2000 dollars. Spent money [at each stage] when the pole was cut down, carved, and erected. When the pole was erected everybody was invited.

3rd pole

It was the [long pole] now lying on the bank ... [No. 13]. It was at the same time I made myself [*αyuk*]. They made Ksedekt [a hair decoration] at that feast and they made it [with] mink's tails. [A man of] (Gitwinlkul Ganhada) yaxyaq was the carver. [Yaxyaq was the Kitwancool house (III.A.5) of the Frog-Raven phratry, which at one time had a house in the Kitwanga Taawdzep.] Qénaget is the name of that pole. It was to me first xstam-géomgipεik. This G.anhada (yaxyaq) was a laxse.'l not the same family. He could use another of the same crest but not the same family.

4th pole

After this [I] had another pole made. This was the pole right in front of my house; the short one, old nεqt, [No. 20]. In the feast ... when I was made hallait I stood up on the top of the pole. Carver [was] gitxon (laxskik Gitsalaə). nεqt is the name of the pole. It was a very long pole. It was only when the pole fell down that a part of it was cut [off] and [I stood] on that part of it when [I] became hallait. And I made myself [*αyuk*] when we put [up] this pole. That is the time I take my name lagax'nits.

Feast

After this, one of my uncles died. [His title was] tengwɔx or nεxt. I made a big potlatch and called [the people of] Gitomaks, Kispayaks, Gutsgukla, Gilwintkul. And I was [again] a hallait. Two years after that another uncle died. [This] was 'axg.ɔt. I gave two feasts 2 years after their death.

Pole ganuget

After that I made another feast for 'axg.ɔt and I became hallait again. When I finished that I had [carved] the other pole G.anuget [No. 19] with the trap door. I called someone to cut it. It was qɔx̣ [Qawq; IV.D.1] (laxskiok) Gitwanga and ʰniəslag.anos [III.B.6]; (Gitwintkul, laxkibu) [both] to [carve] it. It was on account [of] lengwəx death. Eighty blankets each was the payment for cutting. They cut that pole very far 4 miles from here, on the other side [of the river] from here, at the foot of the mountain. The same man that cut the tree chose it. The man who carved that pole was galdixget, Thom Campbell (laxse'ol), who took the knife of his wife who had the right to carve it. She was tiyenskux (laxkibu Gitwintkul) so she could not carve it. Her husband did the carving. This happened about 20 years ago [circa 1904]. [I] made a yuku, and only my sister siwitiyé could help me and her family. And some of my family would not help me because they had become christians. Some had gone to Muskiwisli and stayed there. And my mother helped also g.amg.al'ó.l. I had Kispayaks Gitəmmaks and all the other village[s]. Also Gitxadim, Gitlaxdam, Gitwənksit. I spent much money. I invited all the people from different places.

At that feast I took another name nɛqt. And the name of 'aləx. I took these two chiefs' names.

When I finished putting up that pole, my niece died. She had [the name] lagaxnitz.... She had taken my name after I had [become] tengwəx and nɛqt. We made another yuku when she died. One year after that another man died, niəsg.amalé, one of my uncles. And we made another feast, not very long after that.

I asked somebody to cut another pole. haxpəgwɔ́·tu [II.C.3] (Gitsegukla, Gisg.ast). That was for cutting -- $70. He cut it about 1-1/2 miles below about 1/2 mile from river. [He] pulled [it] down to the river and floated [it] here. I spent about $300. of my own money and some of my family helped me and we spent altogether $600. on this pole. That was the pole of g.ansil in front of the house. This was over 3 years. The carver haxpəgwɔ-

17 Hlengwah as a native police constable in 1918. (National Museums of Canada, 71-8483.)

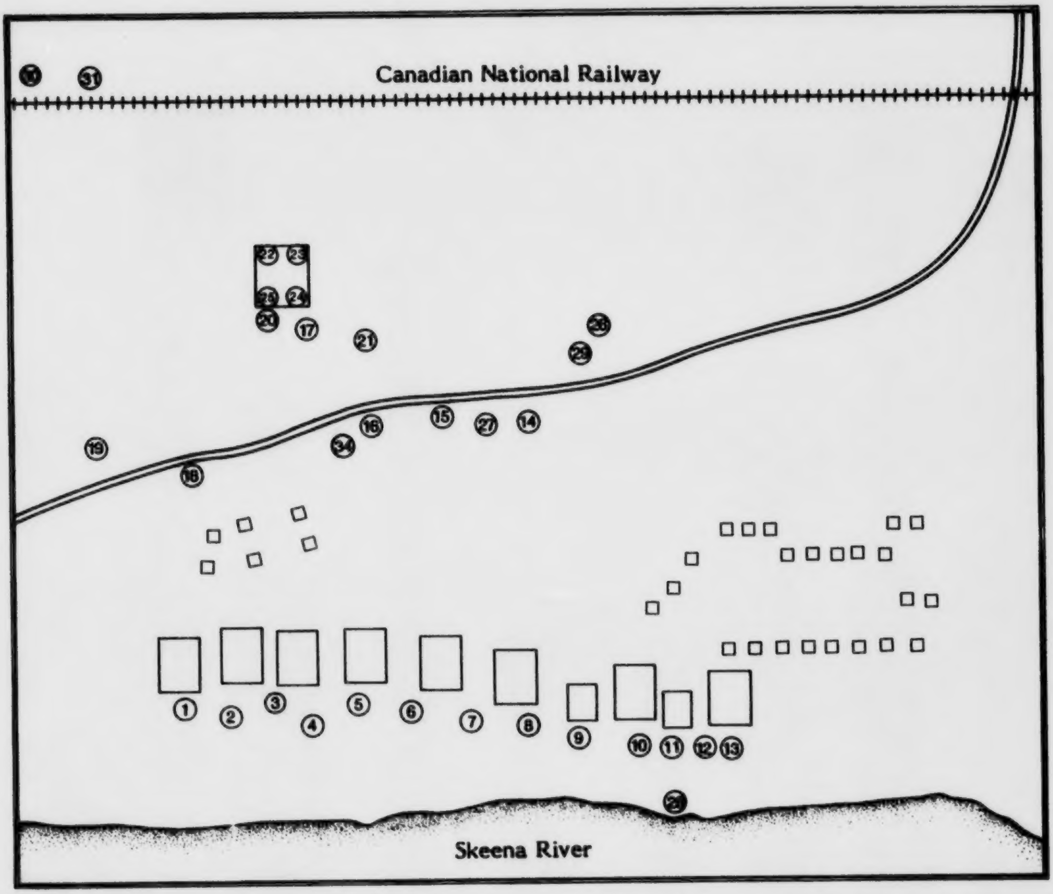
tax carved it. I [gave] him one horse [worth] about $110. with about $80. in cash. After carving, all the people hauled it. Gitsegukla and Gitwintkul and Gitwanga and there were some white people who helped.

Thom Man (white man) cut two more poles. For erecting the g.ansil. He [was] paid $10. for ... each of these poles, $20. altogether. I spent about $150. [on] food for the guests. 35 boxes of pilot bread.... The pole was erected in the fall (october). When I put up that pole I spent about $800.... And my family helped me [with] about $500. besides.

Poles inside the house [Nos. 22-25] were made at the same time [as] the poles outside, and [I] spent about $25. for [the] carving. These poles were placed after the house was up. Wallas Campbell (a white man) cut these poles for me. [That cost] $15. each. Carver: Richard Douse, Kwɔłstâm [III.B.5] (laxkibu Gitwintkul); carved only 3 years ago. $25. each pole for carving, $100. for the four. They were erected in the same feast. The poles of the roof of the house have been here for over 100 years. 3 chiefs died in the house here. That is since the time the poles were cut.

18 The last picture taken of Hlengwah, 31 July 1927, shortly before his death. (National Museums of Canada, 70423.)

Part Three
The Totem Poles and Monuments at Gitwangak Village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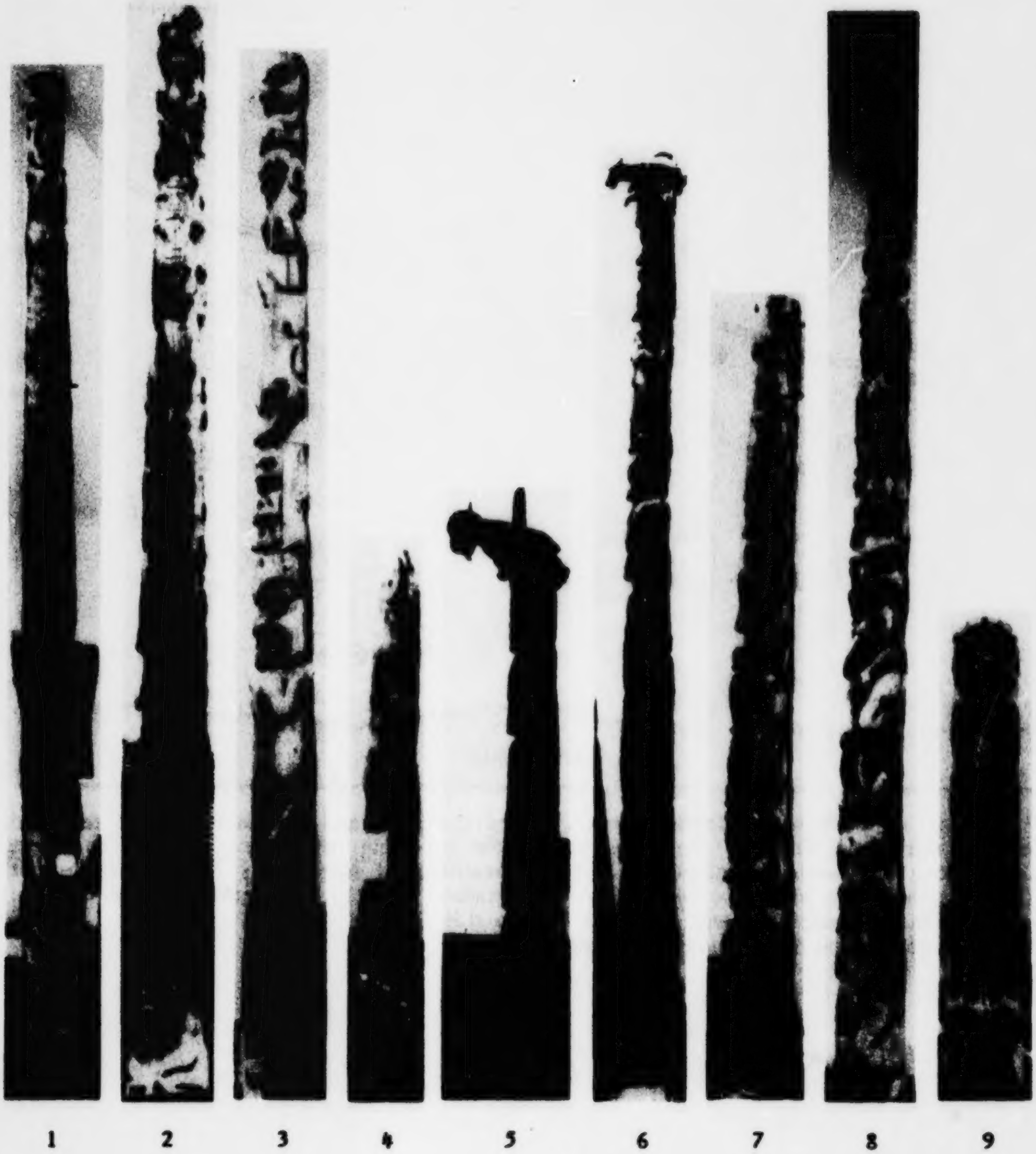
Skeena River

19 Original locations of the poles and monuments at Gitwangak Village. The large rectangles along the riverbank indicate the original, traditional-style plank houses; the small rectangles indicate early graves. Numbers in the circles correspond to the numbers assigned to the poles and monuments in the text and the following reference guides. The exact positions of monuments 32 and 33 are not known. (Map by D. Kappler after M. Barbeau and H. Smith.)



20 Reference guide to the totem poles and house posts of Gitwangak Village. Not to scale.

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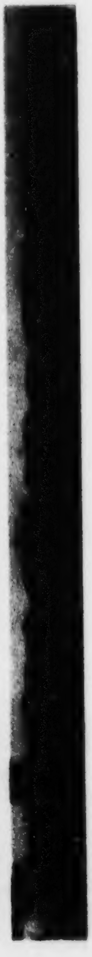

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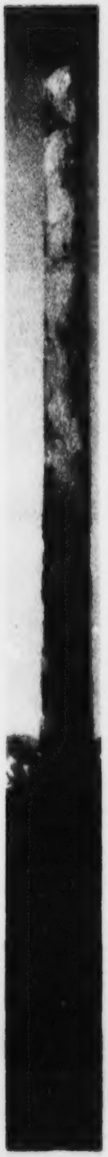

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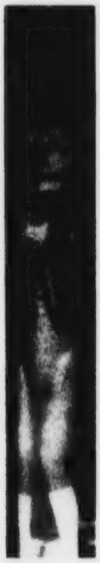

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Man-in-the-Copper-Shield

(No. 1)

Man-in-the-Copper-Shield stood at the western extremity of Gitwangak Village and belonged to the house of Thaku or Halaist (IV.A.6), of the Frog-Raven phratry. Thaku was closely related to Chief Lelt (Snake, IV.A.4) of the Frog-Woman (Nigyamks) clan, and the crests and inherited privileges are almost identical to his (Barbeau 1929: 45). At the time of the totem pole restoration project of the National Museum in 1924, Paul Benson held the title of Thaku.

The pole was erected about 1918 (Barbeau 1929: 45) in memory of Kwawdzebax, a leading member of his family. It was carved by Haxpagwawtu (II.C.3) of the Fireweed phratry of Gitsegukla Village.

Barbeau (1924) estimated the pole to be about 30 feet long. The carving on the pole is relatively crude with large adze marks. It was originally completely painted in commercial paint: the shaft was white, the figures pale blue, the eyes black and the nostrils red (Barbeau 1929: 47). It was repainted in 1924 by the crew under the direction of Harlan I. Smith, and was relocated at that time to the western end of the row of poles in the centre of Gitwangak.

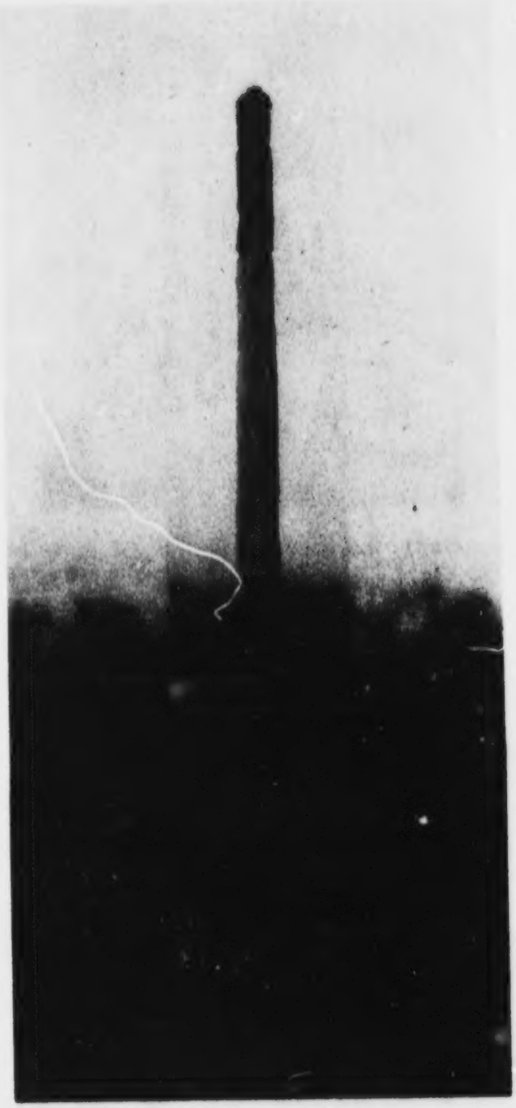
The original potlatch and pole raising took place in the midst of winter according to a photograph taken by a local resident that records the event (Fig. 10). In the photo the people are shown ready at the ropes that will be used to elevate the pole which is still on the ground.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1 & 2. Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (Getamhayets). A human figure with hands on knees, wearing a woven cedar-bark hat. A long shaft, more than one-third of the pole length, intervenes between it and the next figure of Man-in-the-Copper-Shield, which depicts a smaller human figure with hands folded across its abdomen, standing inside the representation in wood of a copper shield. The association between ancestral figures and coppers (G. MacDonald 1981) is well illustrated.

3. Hanging frog (*sparemganao*), a mask of the Frog-Raven phratry.

4. At the bottom of the pole is a large human face which Barbeau initially identified as



22 Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (pole 1) after restoration in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68068.)

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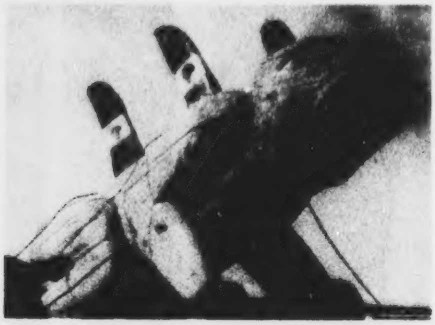

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21 Reference guide to the monuments at Gitwangak Village. Not to scale.

Man-in-the-Copper-Shield
(No. 1)

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3. Hanging frog (*sparemganao*), a mask of the Frog-Raven phratry.

4. At the bottom of the pole is a large human face which Barbeau initially identified as

22 Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (pole 1) after restoration in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68068.)

23 Pole 1. The Man-in-the-Copper-Shield figure at the top of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 68067.)

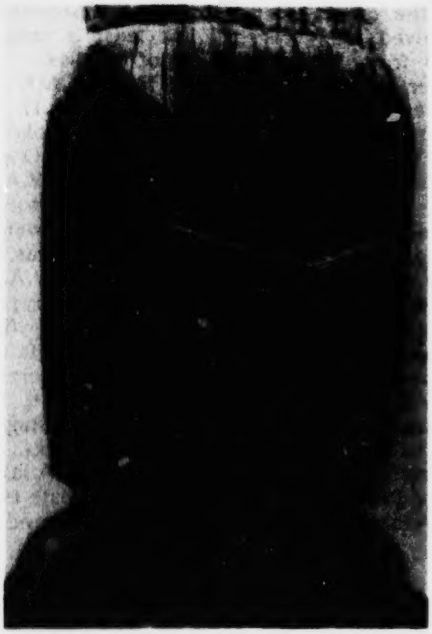
24 Pole 1. The lower Man-in-the-Copper-Shield. (National Museums of Canada, 65239.)

Thaku, but changed his identification to the crest Halfway-Out.

The frog crest refers to the myth of the ancestor Nigyamks. Barbeau (1929: 43) presented the story as follows:

> Neegyamks, the daughter of chief Negwa'on, is the "grandmother" of Laelt and other members of the 'Neegyamks (Frog-woman) clan. Several chiefs had courted her without success. One night, while she slept in the maiden's compartment at the rear of the house, she disappeared; and the frogs were heard, as every day, croaking in the lake above the village of Antegwalae, on the Nass, where Negwa'on and his family lived. Her relatives thought that one of her suitors had kidnapped her. For two years they could not find her. The people, one day, beheld two Frogs in Negwa'on's doorway; one of them carried the other on its back. They were apparently trying to speak, one saying, "Tsewit," and the other "Qaderh." This was later to be their names. And they led the people on to the lake. Negwa'on invited the neighbouring tribes, Gitlarhdamks and Gitwinksilk, to come and help in draining the lake. When the lake was drained, the people beheld a huge number of small frogs taking to flight; then the Flying-frogs flew by. A

25 Pole 1. Hanging frog. (National Museums of Canada, 64312.)



26 Pole 1. Halfway-Out-Person. (National Museums of Canada, 64315.)

Gitwinlkul man, Sedawqt -- of the family of Wutarhayaets -- caught a Flying-frog that had wings and looked like a moth. When the lake was nearly dry, a house-front painting was seen floating; and the young woman, 'Neegyamks, sat upon it. One of her brothers speared the house-front, and captured it. The people then saw that 'Neegyamks had frogs all over her body -- on her knees, the back of her hands, her breasts, her eyebrows. Many small frogs were painted on the house-front. Since then the Frogs have been the special crest of this clan. 'Neegyamks said, after she had been rescued from the lake, "I am not fit to come among the people again. You had better kill me. Put me away, but keep my children." After they complied with her request, they saw a huge cane, the Pole-whereon-climb-frogs *(Randeptoehl-ranaa'o)* rising from the lake bottom. At its base was a human-like being; a number of small frogs climbed along the shaft; and a large Frog sat at the top. They decided to use the same figures on their own pole. Between the ribs of the large Frog, the Frog-chief, the heads of people were to be seen. They killed this Frog and adopted it as their principal crest.

The other crests Barbeau claimed Thaku received fairly recently (at least a century ago) from Wialux (V.A.3a) of Kispiox. The latter is now a name under Hage (V.A.3) and therefore related to Telgamuq (V.A.1) and Nekt (V.A.1a) of Kispiox. Barbeau explained this in the following way (1929: 46-47). One of Thaku's uncles, of the same household (IV.A.6), once went to Kispiox to gamble. He returned home with Lawgawlaxlaq, a Kispiox woman whom he adopted as his sister. She was the only survivor in the family of Wialux (V.A.3a) of the Frog-Raven phratry of Kispiox; all others had died in wars and epidemics. As a result of the adoption, Thaku and his family became the owners of several Wialux crests: Man-in-the-Copper-Shield, Halfway-Out, and presumably also Man-Cut-in-Half (Staget). Wialux was of the same family as Nekt, the warrior, and his descendants Nekt (V.A.1a) or Hage (V.A.3) of Kispiox, and the crests must therefore be those that Nekt conquered or obtained at Kitimat during his raid. Man-Cut-in-Half and Halfway-Out refer to the Kitimat villager Nekt stabbed and cut nearly in half, and who ran up to his waist into the water. Man-in-the-Copper-Shield was not previously mentioned, but Nekt quite probably captured a copper shield (*hayets*) with a human-like crest engraved on it at the same village.

The crests of Nekt are especially important ones in that they were captured in war and brought back to the Skeena area. It is interesting to note that they went with Nekt when he left the Taawdzep, eventually were established in Kispiox, and only came back to the Gitwangak people through the marriage alliance described above.

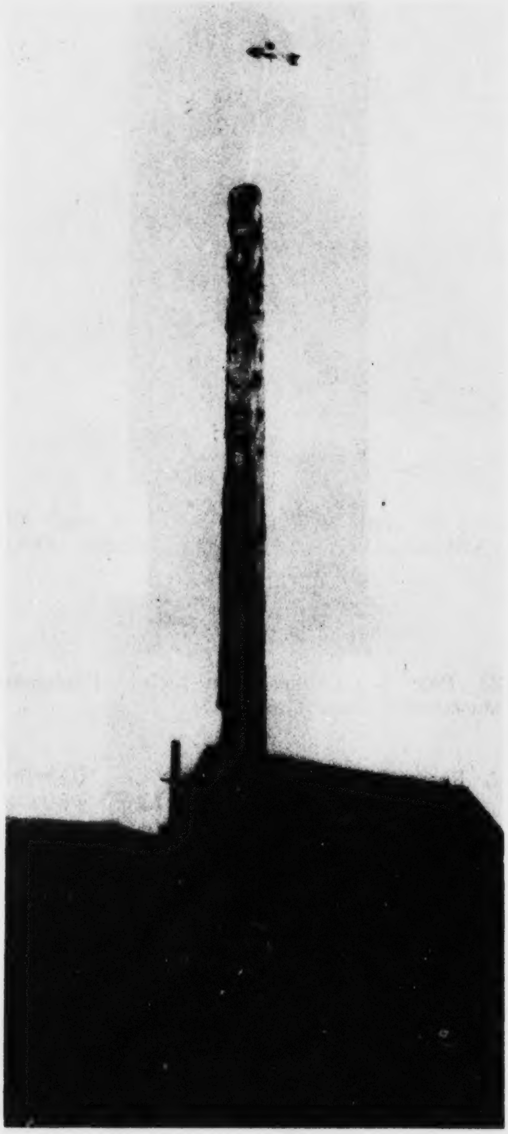
This pole is still the westernmost pole on the village road. It was restored in 1967 by the Skeena River Totem Pole Restoration Society, under the direction of Phillip Ward, and is still in a good state of preservation.

Frogs-Hanging-Down
(No. 2)

Frogs-Hanging-Down was erected by Txaphapa of the house of Lelt (IV.A.4) in commemoration of a former Txaphapa or Lelt. Barbeau claimed (1929: 45) that Txaphapa's father belonged to Githawn's family (Eagle) of Kitselas Village. For that reason he asked Githawn to carve the pole. He was assisted by Nieswaxs and Niesadai of Lelt's family who had lived at Kitselas for many years. Lelt told Barbeau that there were no artists among the Gitksan at the time who were related to him and eligible to carve the pole, so Githawn was commissioned for the work.

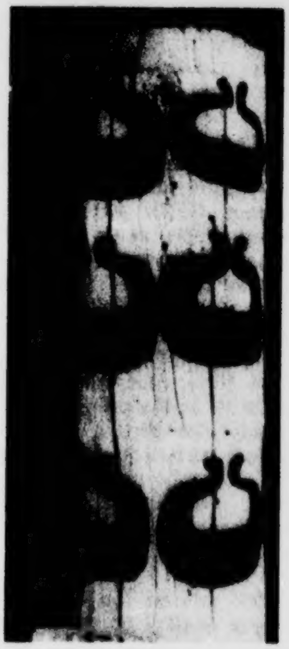
The pole was about 50 feet long (Barbeau 1925) and was probably erected about the time of the Skeena River Rebellion in 1887. The earliest photograph of this pole was taken by J. O'Dwyer in 1899. When Harlan I. Smith photographed it in 1915 a weather-vane arrow on a long stick was on top of the pole (Fig. 27). As to the quality of the pole, Barbeau commented (1929: 45) that "the carving here is not of the best, although the representation of the small frogs hanging was quite effective before crude commercial paint spoiled them through restoration." Barbeau gave three variants of the name of the pole as "Hanging-frogs" or "Frogs-hanging-down" *(palxumganao)* or "Ribs-of-the-Frog" *(andeptuhlganao)*.

1. Person-in-the-Lake (Lugyudemdzemdax) is the figure at the top of the pole. This is the human figure that rises from the lake, described in the text for pole 1. He holds the pole on which frogs climb.
2. Copper-Smell (Isowq). It is curious that the shapes represented as Copper-Smell are strike-a-lights, which are always made of steel. The uniqueness of a device to make fire was undoubtedly enough, when first introduced, to be adopted as a crest.
3. The Medzeks. This bird is really the eagle crest captured by Nekt at Kitimat. Since the eagle was already claimed by the Eagle phratry on the Skeena, their claim was respected and another name was found for the bird.
4. Hanging frog *(palxumganao)* is a frog facing down the pole, split from its forehead to its hind legs.
5. Another Medzeks, bird of Nekt.
6. Six frogs hanging down *(palxumganao)*.



27 Frogs-Hanging-Down (pole 2). (Photo by Harlan I. Smith, 1915; National Museums of Canada, 34602.)

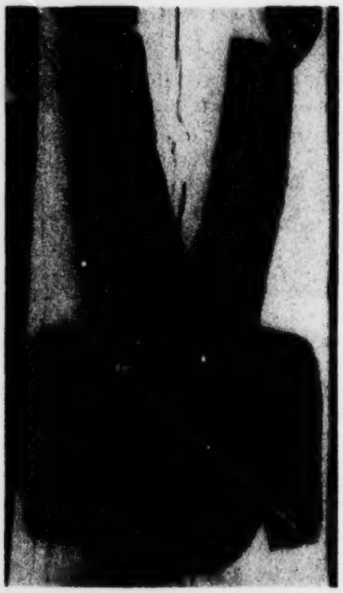
28 Pole 2. Person-in-the-Lake. (National Museums of Canada, 68043.)



29 Pole 2. Copper-Smell (strike-a-lights). (National Museums of Canada, 68033.)

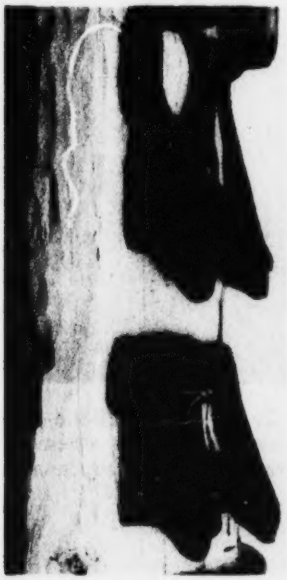
7. Person-of-the-Doorway-Post (Gitemganpto). This well-carved figure wears a woven cedar-bark circular headpiece like the specimen that belonged to Nekt (see J. MacDonald 1980). He holds in his hands a cedar-bark rope which held the swinging door of the house.
8. Beaver *(tsemolth)* is the crest of the carver Githawn of Kitselas.
9. Chief-of-Frogs (Semoigetemganao) is a large frog in a squatting position to designate the pole as belonging to the Frog-Raven phratry.

30 Pole 2. Medzeks, Nekt's eagle crest from Kitimat. (National Museums of Canada, 68042.)



31 Pole 2. Hanging frog. (National Museums of Canada, 68032.)

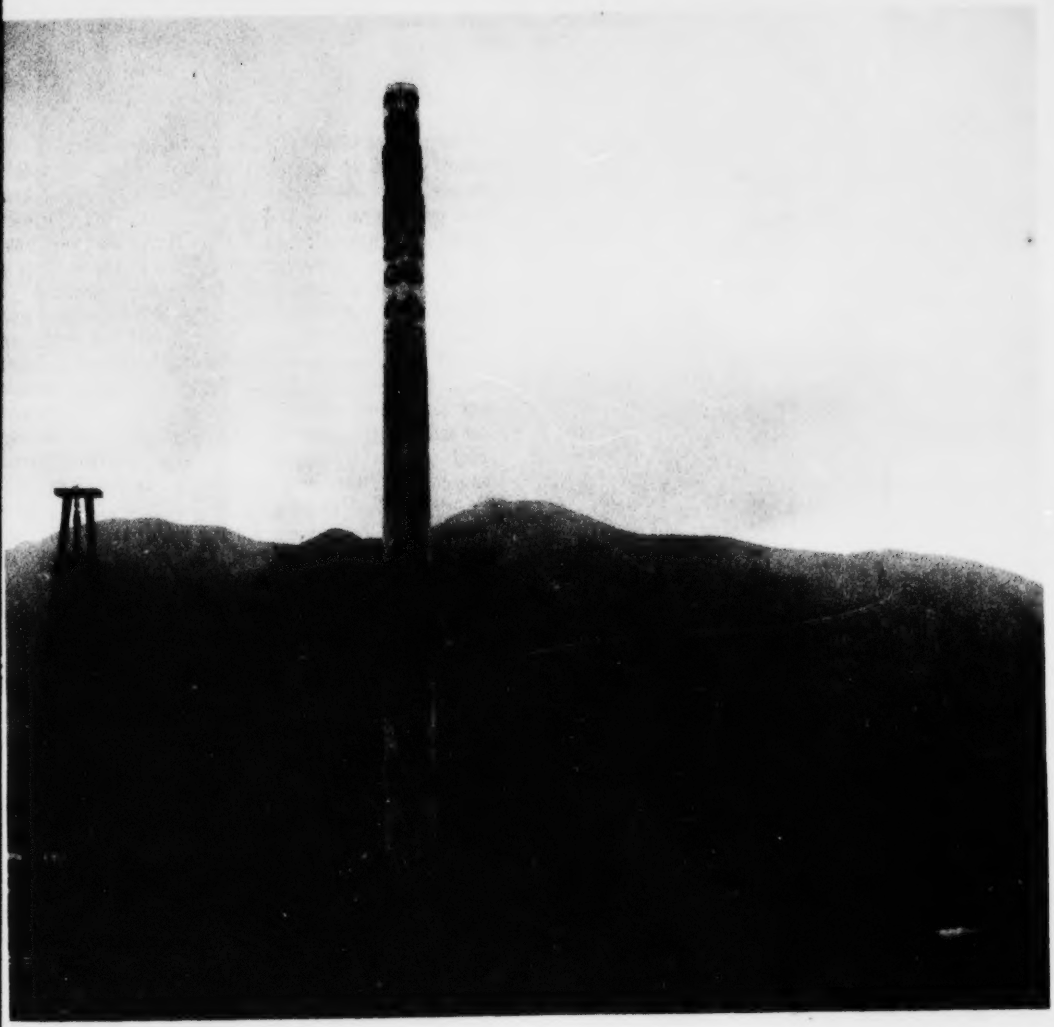
32 Pole 2. The second Medzeks, bird of Nekt. (National Museums of Canada, 68037.)



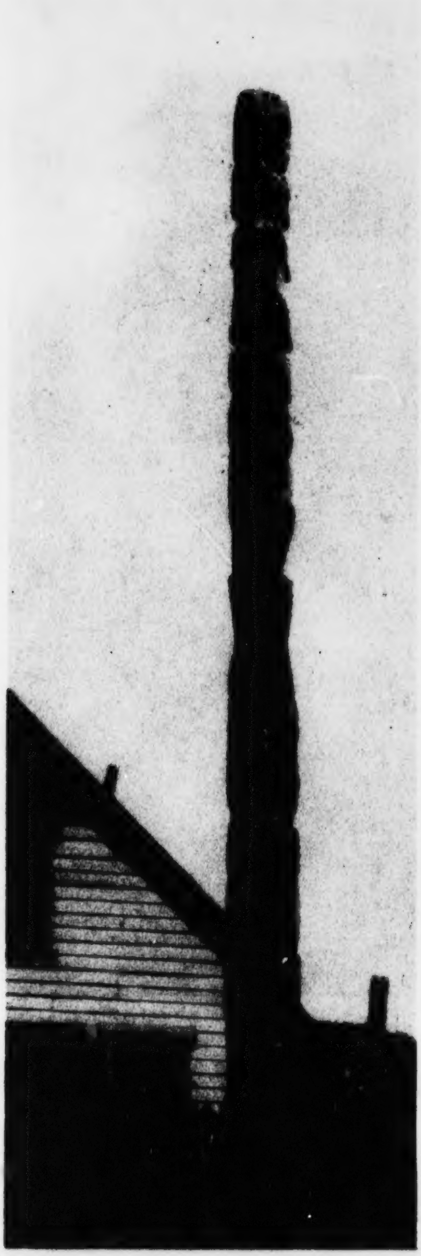
33 Pole 2. Six frogs hanging down. (National Museums of Canada, 68039.)

34 Pole 2. Person-of-the-Doorway-Post standing over the figure of a beaver gnawing a stick. (National Museums of Canada, 68047.)

35 Pole 2. Chief-of-Frogs. (National Museums of Canada, 65237.)



36 Frogs-Hanging-Down after restoration and repainting. It was one of the first poles to be moved from the riverbank to the centre of the village in September 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68051.)



37 Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (pole 3) as recorded in 1915. (National Museums of Canada, 34598.)

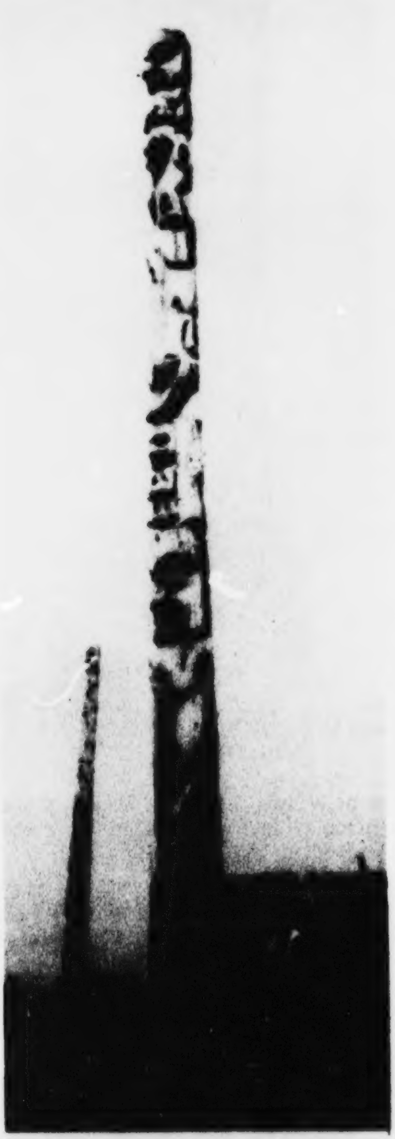
Man-in-the-Copper-Shield
(No. 3)

This Man-in-the-Copper-Shield belonged to Haku (IV.A.5), a close relative of both Thaku and Lelt. In 1924 John Fowler held the title of Haku. The pole was about 35 feet long and was erected around 1875 in commemoration of a former chief of the same name.

Emmons recorded this pole around 1910, but called it "Hanging-down-frogs." This could be confused with the name of pole 2 or, more likely, the name could be applied to all Frog-Raven poles on which the frogs pointed down the poles. Barbeau (1929: 47) felt that the pole is remarkable in its carving: "it is characteristic of the work of the upper Nass artists. The figures are compact and well conceived and the carving is mature and firm."

The figures are, from the top of the pole:

1. Haku, the chief for whom the pole was erected, holding a small bear *(smax)* upside down between his hands (the bear is actually carved as a frog). The bear is the crest of Haku's father, who was Gexu of the Wolf phratry of Gitlaxdamks on the Nass River. The bear crest is used here to denote Haku's paternal origin.
2. Large frog *(ganao)*, with its head pointing down the pole.
3. Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (Getemhayets). A small figure clasping its knees and framed by a large image of a copper shield.
4. Legemgenex. According to Barbeau's informant, Alfred Sinclair, this was the figure of a man of that name from Haku's family in whose memory the pole was dedicated after that of Haku himself. Barbeau disputed this interpretation (1929: 46n) and suggested it is the Halfway-Out crest that was captured by Nekt from Kitimat Village.
5. Hanging frog *(sparemganao)*, a large figure of a frog on which the painted spots could still be seen clearly in 1915. These spots were restored to all of the frogs on this pole, but no explanation is given why this particular feature is so extensively used on the pole.
6. Kwohamon, a deceased person in the house of Haku, according to Alfred Sinclair. However, Barbeau concluded that this is also the figure of Halfway-Out deriving from the warrior Nekt.



38 Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (foreground) before restoration in 1925-26. (National Museums of Canada, 59710.)

39 Pole 3. Chief Haku holding a "bear." (National Museums of Canada, 68072.)

40 Pole 3. Large frog. (National Museums of Canada, 68077.)

The pole was relocated facing the street through the village, away from the river that it had faced originally. It has been repainted since and is still standing.

41 Pole 3. Man-in-the-Copper-Shield. (National Museums of Canada, 68074.)

43 Pole 3. Hanging frog. (National Museums of Canada, 64295.)

42 Pole 3. Legemgenex. (National Museums of Canada, 65317.)

44 Pole 3. Kwohamon or Halfway-Out. (National Museums of Canada, 64308.)

45 Man-in-the-Copper-Shield as restored and relocated in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68068.)

Man-Cut-in-Half
(No. 4)

According to Emmons (1909-10), the name given to him for this pole was "Stagit" or "Half-man" or "Man-cut-in-half." Barbeau (1929: 46) named the pole "Supernatural-frog" after the topmost figure. Since the latter is a generalized crest of the Frog-Raven phratry, I prefer the original description.

This was originally an entry pole to the house of Haku that was probably erected about 1845. Since it appears from the archaeology at the Taawdzep that it was not abandoned until around 1830, and we know that the population moved to an intermediate village first, this must have been one of the earliest poles raised at the present village site of Gitwangak.

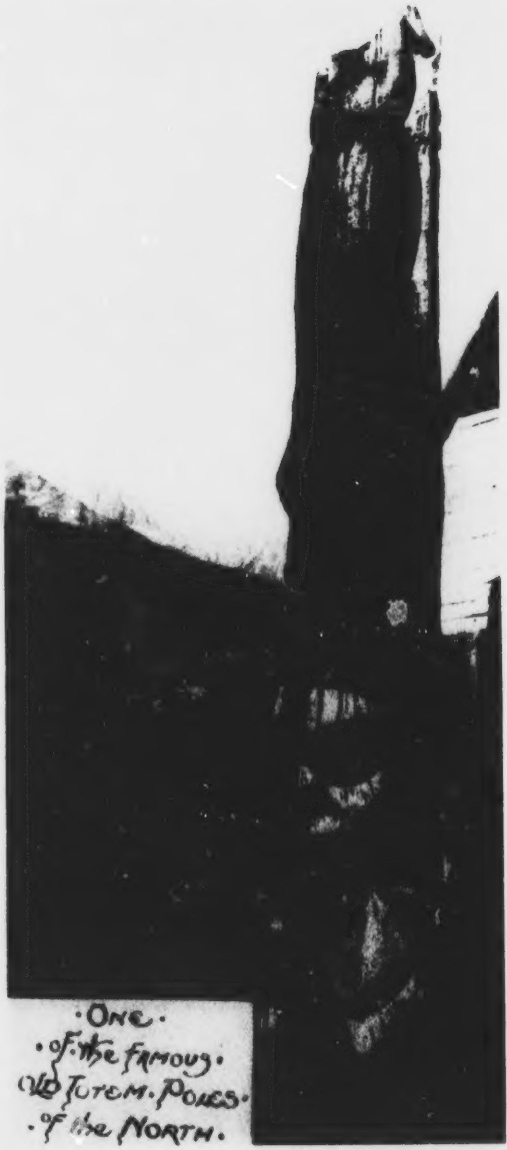
It is not recorded who carved the pole, but it was erected for "Old Haku" when the second of that name took his place. Barbeau commented (1929: 47):

> its technique -- particularly the hollowed-out section between the Frog and the Man -- indicates beyond doubt that it is the work of a Nass River carver, some of whose work is also to be seen at Angyedae. It is hollowed out at the back.

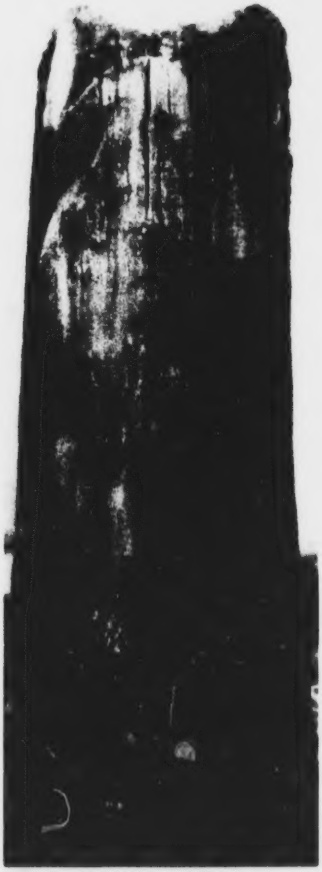
The figures on the pole are, from the top:

1. Supernatural Frog (Sparemganao).
2. Man-Cut-in-Half (Staget). According to Alfred Sinclair (Barbeau 1929: 47n), this crest was found in the lake, together with the crest of the Supernatural Frog. Split figures appear to be one of several artistic conventions to show the process of transformation between different kinds or states of being.
3. Frog *(ganao)*. The head faces up between the arms of a Man-Cut-in-Half, the body of the frog disappearing into the doorway hole of the pole. Harlan I. Smith recorded a somewhat different version of the frog crest as used by Haku (1926: pole 4):

   > The myth about the title Haaku comes from Kitwancool and runs as follows:
   >
   > "Before the flood Nigams, the beautiful daughter of Na Gwa Own, that is, Long Arm, who had been sought by many suitors, was playing in a little canoe on a lake. It tipped over and she was lost. She was carried away and married by a



46 Man-Cut-in-Half (pole 4) circa 1927. (Public Archives Canada, 45117.)



47 Pole 4. Supernatural Frog on top of the house-front pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65178.)

48 Pole 4. Split figure of Man-Cut-in-Half framing the doorway to the house (the pole has been cut off near the top of the doorway hole). (National Museums of Canada, 65182.)

frog. Na Gwa Own sought her for two years but was unable to find her. At last two little frogs knocked at the door of the Potlatch house where Na Gwa Own and his clansmen were gathered and when they were let in they said their mother had sent them to borrow an awl such as is used by the Indian women as a needle. The elder of the two little frogs took the awl in his mouth and they hopped away. Na Gwa Own and his retainers followed them to a lake which they drained by digging a trench. All the other frogs fled but Nigams and her frog children were found at the bottom of the lake and taken home. On her shoulders, breasts, thighs and feet were raised places like those of a frog. Probably the surface of her whole body would eventually have become like that of a frog. Na Gwa Own having conquered the chief frog took the frog for his crest and later moved to Kitwanga where his descendants continue to live to this day."

This pole was restored and relocated on the street through the village with the others in 1926, but has been subsequently destroyed.

Pole of the Mountain Lion
(No. 5)

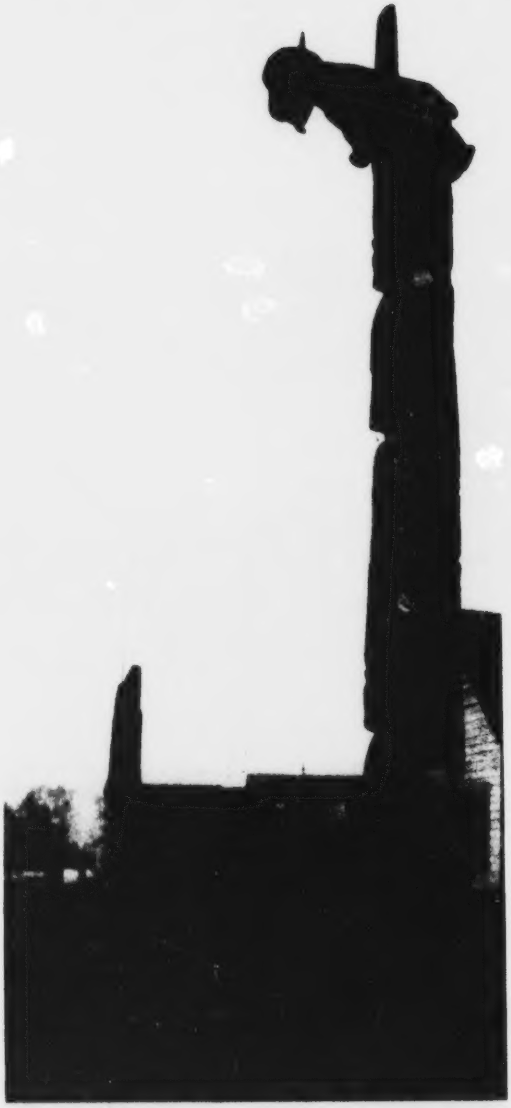
Pole of the Mountain Lion stands at the beginning of a series of three Wolf phratry poles. It was erected in memory of a chief named Hlawts (IV.B.1) by a successor. In 1926 the title was held by Wallace Morgan. The pole consists of two parts: a vertical, fully carved pole, and a horizontal carving of a mountain lion *(hawao)* at the top. Each part was the work of a different artist. Barbeau and Smith differ as to the carver responsible for the mountain lion. Barbeau (1929: 13) claimed it was the work of Haidzamshliyawn of the family of Wudahayets (Frog-Raven, III.A.3) of Kitwancool. Smith (1926) was told it was the work of Gakl (Frog-Raven, III.A.8), also of Kitwancool. Since both carvers were from the same phratry and village, one may have "stood over" the other. It was common for one person to be officially in charge of a commission to carve a pole by virtue of rank, et cetera, but for another man to actually do the carving (Shane 1978).

According to Smith, the pole was re-erected (Smith 1926: Pole 5)

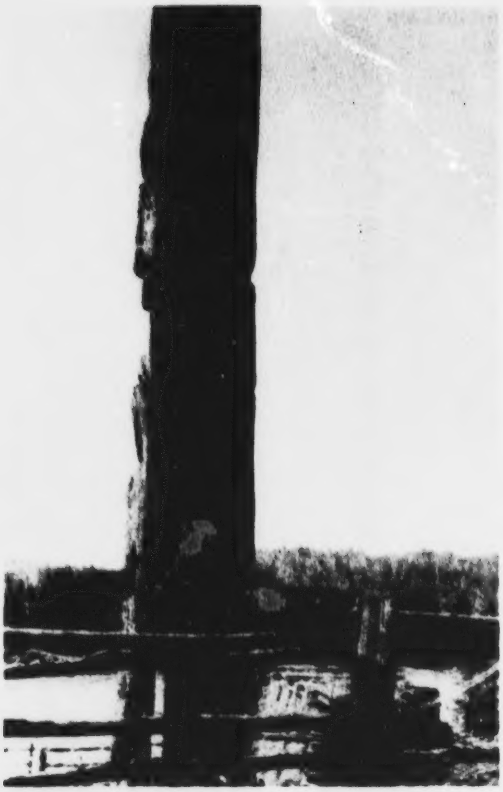
> about 1865 and was then supported on a new pole which was small enough to go in the hollow back of the original pole and was held there by three cross pieces. One end of each cross piece was inserted in a hole in one side of the hollow of the totem pole while the other was pressed down into a slot in the opposite side. These cross pieces were hatched alternately.

This unusual feature is shown in Figure 50. The mountain lion was fixed to the pole on the vertical tail of a small bear (or land otter?). Barbeau and Smith are in complete agreement as to the carver of the main vertical pole: it was carved by Nisawilp of the Eagles of the Gispaxloats tribe, a Coast Tsimshian from Port Simpson. Barbeau claimed that the pole was first raised around 1865 (Barbeau 1929: 188). It was then used as a house entry pole for use on ceremonial occasions. Once the reinforcing pole had been added (about 1885), it could no longer be used for this purpose as the new pole blocked the entrance, as seen in Figure 49.

The pole was relocated in 1926 by Harlan I. Smith. Due to the number of times it



49 Pole of the Mountain Lion (pole 5) after restoration in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68082.)



50 Pole of the Mountain Lion with the support added probably circa 1885. (National Museums of Canada, 65278.)

51 Pole 5. Separate figure of mountain lion. (National Museums of Canada, 68023.)

has been strengthened (1885, 1926, 1942 and 1967), the pole is in a remarkably good state of preservation in view of the fact it is at least 115 years old.

The figures on the pole are, from the top:

1. Mountain lion *(hawao)*.
2. Wolf *(kibu)*, head down.
3. Ensnared bear *(tsiphumsmax)*.
4. Wolf *(kibu)*.
5. Ensnared bear *(tsiphumsmax)*, around doorway.

The mountain-lion crest is explained by Barbeau (1929: 131):

> When the members of these families [Tenamget, Hlawts and Hrpilarxah under Axti] lived at Kwunekstaet, on the Skeena, they learnt that a monster — the Hawaao — from the seacoast, was coming up the river, destroying the people on his way. An old woman named Eye-brow *(Larh'aw'e)*, one day, went with her bucket to the river's edge and was heard crying. Only her ankles were found on the shore. The monster had devoured her. Her relatives succeeded in overtaking it, and drove it into the river. There they killed it with arrows, from their canoes, while they sang the following song — now a sacred dirge and a paddling song — "The Lion draws back into the river. As fierce as a Grizzly, he is not frightened of his pursuers in the war canoe." After the monster was dead, the people cut its carcass open and found within its body haliotis pearl labrets, which they kept as charms. And

52 Pole 5. Wolf, on whose tail the mountain lion is impaled. (National Museums of Canada, 68030.)

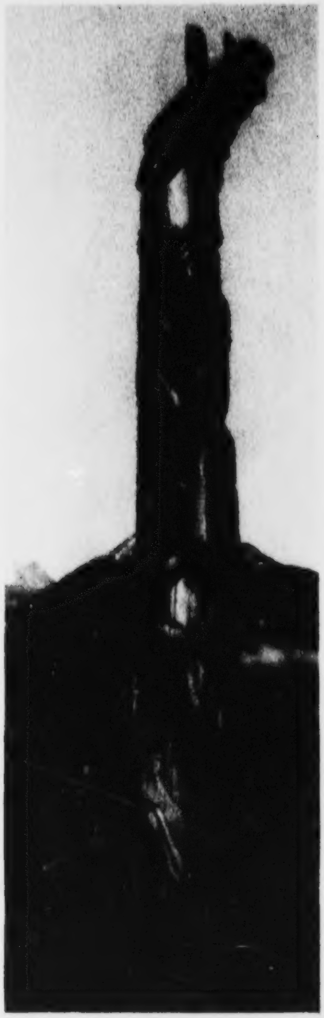
> they adopted the Lion as one of their emblems.

Harlan I. Smith recorded the same legend with some variations of detail (1926):

> Long ago a man-killing Mountain Lion came up from the coast killing many Indians in the lower Skeena Valley. It terrorized the Indians of the entire valley by killing children and even men and women and escaping from or killing those brave enough to attack it. It destroyed nearly all the Indians at the village on Kitselas Canyon and continued the havoc up the valley. At Squnishtat, which is between Cedarvale and Woodcock stations of the Canadian National Railway, two women were killed while picking berries. A chief named We Clots

53 Pole 5. Ensnared bear and wolf. (National Museums of Canada, 68027.)

54 Pole 5. The lowest ensnared-bear figure once surrounded the doorway to a plank house. (National Museums of Canada, 65265.)



55 Recent view of Pole of the Mountain Lion in which its age of about 140 years is apparent. The pole was raised shortly after the move from the Kitwanga fort. (Tourism British Columbia, 9895.)

(Wi-hlots) led some warriors of the Lakibu who had made a vow to kill the Mountain Lion or die in the attempt. They found the beast at Squnishtat and killed it, ending the terror.

A third version of the mountain-lion legend associated with this pole was recorded from an unidentified informant in Gitwangak about 1910 by Lieutenant G.T. Emmons (1909-10):

> This is the story of this big lion. It walked all up the Skeena River from the coast, hunting (for) something to kill, and many people have been killed by this fierce beast, who was camping out on their hunting or fishing ground. The fame of this fierce beast (spread) throughout the country.... One day this big lion found the fishing camp called Squinikstat ... about ten miles below Kitwanga village. An old woman went out of the camp one day to weep. While she was crying outside the camp the big beast sprang over her and killed the poor old woman. She cried out just once, and everybody who lived in this camp heard the terrific cry of the old woman and rushed out their bone spears and their bows, attacking this horrible beast. The dogs got after this lion too.
>
> The barking dogs frightened the big beast, who jumped in the river. Everybody jumped in their canoes after the lion while it was swimming down river and pierced it with their bone spears and shot it with their arrows until the big beast was dead. They then pulled it into the shore and skinned the lion, and called everybody all up the Skeena. They exhibited the skin of the animal to all the people who came to the feast and everybody was much surprised by what had been done in killing the fierce animal with bone spears.

The wolf figures are crests of the Wolf hratry, but have no specific reference to egend.

The ensnared bear is a Wolf phratry crest which forms part of the longest and best-known traditional narratives of the Gitksan. Barbeau provided this version (1929: 131):

> At the time when the people of [Axti's] family all lived at the headwaters of Kalem River, long ago, a beautiful maiden named Hrpeesunt, the sister of Tenemgyet and Hrpeelarhae, once made abusive remarks about the bears, as she slipped in bear's dung on the trail. Two bears in human form overtook her and, for her punishment, led her to the feast house of their chief, where she was taken to wife by his son. She imperceptibly changed to a bear herself and, when living with the Bear in a cavern on the mountain side, she gave birth to twins, which were half human and half bear. Her brothers meanwhile searched for her. She saw them, as they stood at the bottom of a rock slide, squeezed a handful of snow in her hand and let the tiny ball roll down the slide. The brothers, thus made aware of her presence, climbed the rock slide and slew the Bear, saving her semi-human children. Before dying the Bear husband taught his wife two ritual songs, which the hunters should use over his dead body, to ensure good luck. Hrpeesunt's children behaved like bears part of the time; they guided their uncles to the dens of bears in the mountains, and helped them to set their snares. With their assistance and through the use of the dirge songs, which they always sang over dead bears, the families of Tenemgyet, Hrpeelarhae and Arhteeh became prosperous bear hunters and they adopted the Ensnared-bear as their crest.

The families of Axti, Tenemget and Hlawts eventually left Kwunekstaet, where they had encountered the *hawao*, and prepared, according to Barbeau (1924: 241),

> to go to Nekt's village on the Ta'awdzep (fortress) near Kitwanga. They travelled there together. At that time four houses stood on the Ta'awdzep: 1. Nekt (Laxsail), 2. Qawq (Laxskik), 3. Tenemget (Laxskik) and 4. Axgawt (Laxsel). The fortress was not large enough to accommodate all the houses there, and the house of Tenemget was only half on the Ta'awdzep and half of it on the flat (below). This was called Yaxyaga-wilp (in Tshimshian) — suspended house or, in Gitksan, Niyukme-wilp.

From the fortress the families of Axti, Tenamget and Hlawts moved to Gitwangak. It would have been about two generations after the move from the fort (circa 1835) that the house was erected in Gitwangak (circa 1865) with Pole of the Mountain Lion permitting access to the house through the lowest figure, the ensnared bear.

This information was obtained by Barbeau from Stephen Morgan and his wife (who held the name Tenamget at that time).

56 Ensnared Bear (pole 6) in 1915. (National Museums of Canada, 34597.)

Ensnared Bear
(No. 6)

The pole Ensnared Bear (Tsiphumsmax) was erected around 1875 to commemorate Chief Axti (IV.B.2a) of the Wolf phratry according to Barbeau (1929: 132). Smith, on the other hand, claimed (1926: Pole 6) it commemorated Wi-Hlawts (or Hlawts, "Large White Fish," IV.B.1), who was also of the Wolf phratry. In 1926 that title was held by Jacob Morgan.

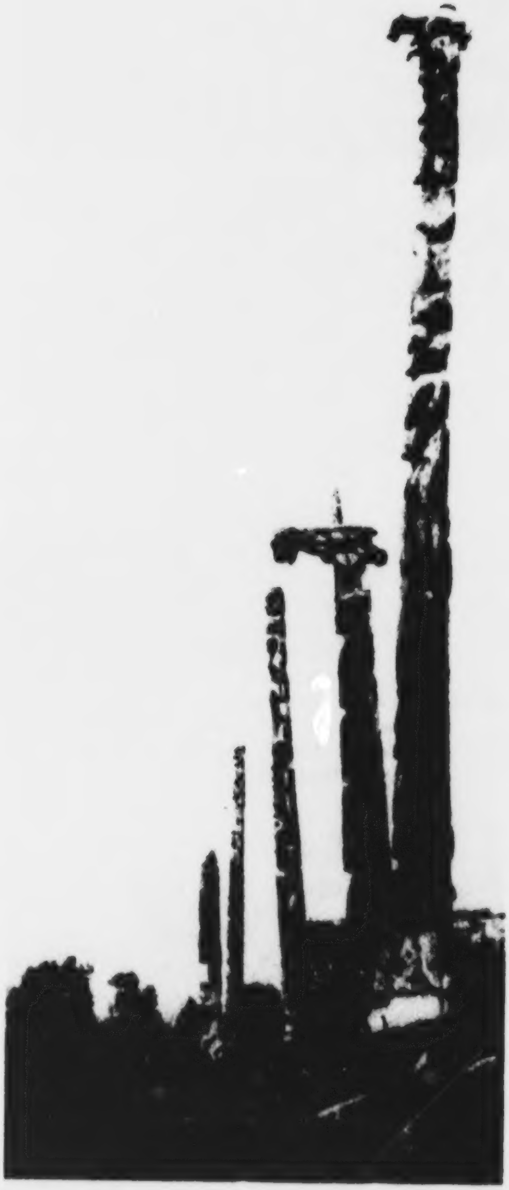
The pole is one of the best-carved and most impressive poles at Gitwangak. According to Chief Tenamget of the Wolf phratry of Gitwangak (IV.B.2; Mrs. Stephen Morgan in 1926), the pole was made by the noted carver Hlami of the Frog-Raven phratry of Kitwancool (Barbeau 1928: 132). However, Chief Axgawt (IV.A.2) of the Frog-Raven phratry (Alfred Sinclair in 1926) told Barbeau (1929: 132) that he thought it was the work of Tewalas (IV.D.3) of the Eagle phratry, a local carver from Gitwangak. It was erected between 1875 and 1885. From the condition of the wood and style of carving, I would favour the earlier date.

The pole was restored and reinforced in the 1924-26 project of the National Museum and eventually took its present place in the row of poles in the centre of the village. It is in relatively good condition today, considering it has stood for at least a century.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

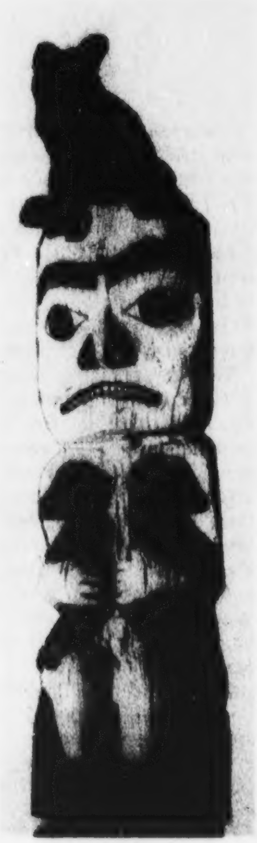
1. A separately carved wolf *(kibu)* figure has been attached to the top of the pole as a phratric marker.
2. The mythical ancestors, Xpisunt and her two bear children (compare with pole 7).
3. Wolf *(kibu)*, head pointing down.
4. Ensnared bear *(tsiphumsmax)* (compare with pole 7).
5. Wolf *(kibu)*, head pointing down.
6. Ensnared bear *(tsiphumsmax)*.

Xpisunt and her bear children are discussed in the text for pole 5, as is the ensnared-bear crest. Barbeau (1929: 131) stated:



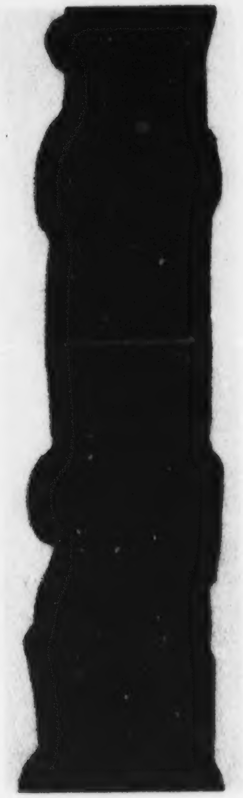
57 Ensnared Bear (foreground) in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 59713.)

58 Pole 6. Wolf, carved from six separate pieces and attached to the top of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 68006.)



59 Pole 6. Bear Mother with her two cubs and with the wolf figure in place on her head to illustrate the Wolf phratry ownership of this pole. (National Museums of Canada, 68019.)

This crest must have belonged to these families in a general way for a prolonged period. Yet, it seems that at least one of its forms, the Bear-with-offspring *(Trhahkilkum-smaih)*, or the Ensnared-bear *(Tsiphum-smaih)* as used on the poles, was acquired from Tseelaeren, of the Wolf phratry at Kisgagas, as compensation for the murder of a member of Arhteeh's family at some time in the fairly distant past.



60 Pole 6. The second wolf. (National Museums of Canada, 68018.)

61 Pole 6. Ensnared bear. (National Museums of Canada, 68017.)

62 Pole 6. The third wolf. Note the difference in the positions of the wolf's tail here and in Figure 60. (National Museums of Canada, 68016.)

63 Pole 6. Ensnared-bear crest at the base of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65290.)

Pole of the Wolf
(No. 7)

The 35-foot Pole of the Wolf (Kanemkibu), was erected in memory of Axti (No Fat on Him; IV.B.2a), of the house of Hlawts (IV.B.1), Wolf phratry of Gitwangak. In 1926 Charles Derrick held this title. Barbeau claimed (1929: 132) that this pole was erected about 1895 by Wilwiutsani in memory of the Axti who erected pole 6.

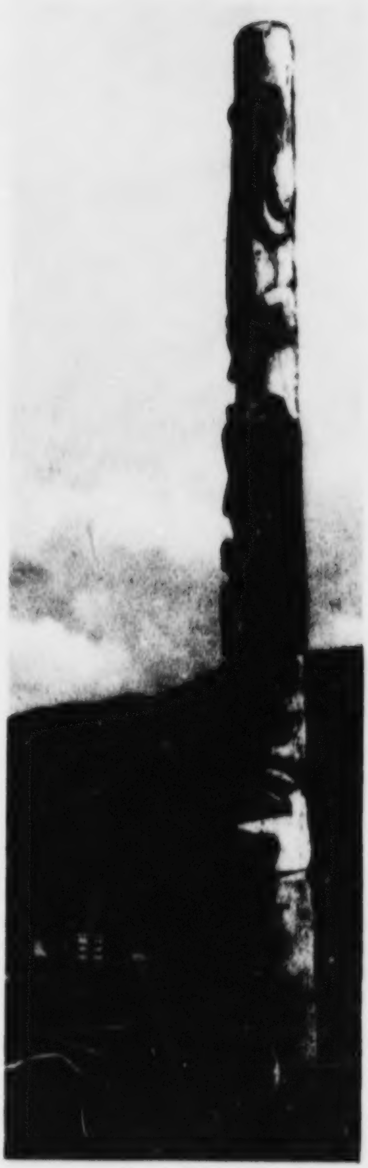
Pole of the Wolf was carved by Hlami of Kitwancool. The carving is well executed, but the extremely plain and abrupt top to the pole looks unfinished, as though a separate figure was intended to be added, as was done in the two Wolf poles that preceded it (Nos. 5 and 6), but there is no evidence that this was ever done.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

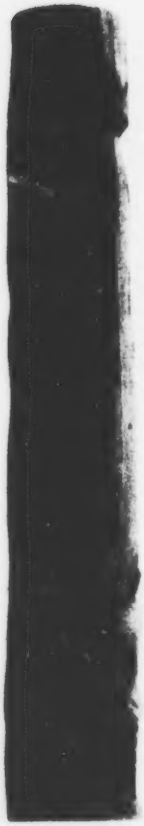
1. Wolf *(kibu)*, with its long tail extending up the pole.
2. Ensnared bear *(tsiphumsmax)*, the same as in poles 5 and 6.
3. Bear cubs *(siawalxu)*, one of which points up the pole and the other points down.
4. Xpisunt, the mythic ancestress, with a bear cub in her arms (see below). The indication of the long hair, parted in the middle, is a somewhat unusual feature on a pole.

A variant of the Xpisunt story was written out for G.T. Emmons by one of the chiefs of Kitwanga in 1910 (Emmons 1909-10):

> This is the story of the carved woman at the foot of No. (7) totem pole. She was captured by the bears because she slipped (on) some bears dirt while she was picking (berries) with some other women on the mountain. She was swearing with madness (and said) some bad words concerning the bears dirt, because she (had) slipped on it. Therefore, she was taken by the bears and lived amongst (them for) several years. (She gave birth to) some bear cubs. (She) is holding one in her bosom at the foot of No. (7) totem pole. While she was living amongst the bears, one day she went out to the toilet ... when she had finished she took off one of her (copper) bracelets and put it on her dirt and went home.... Some of the bears went out to see her dirt, but when the bears found the place where she had her toilet, and found the



64 Pole of the Wolf (pole 7) as it appears today. (Tourism British Columbia, 7933.)



65 Pole 7. Wolf with long tail. (National Museums of Canada, 67984.)

66 Pole 7. Ensnared bear. (National Museums of Canada, 67983.)

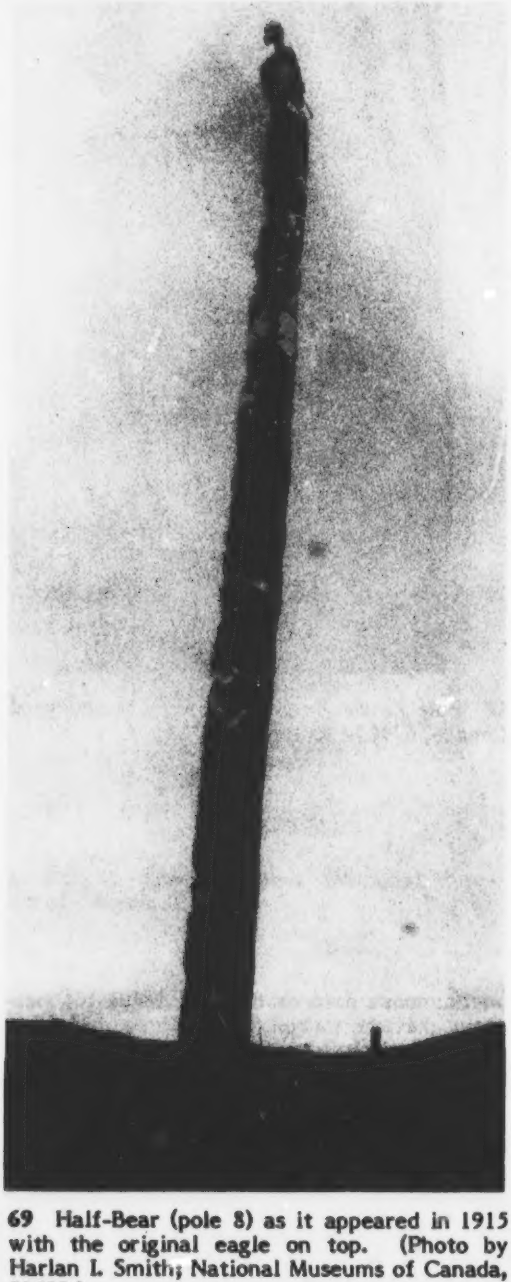
bracelet on her dirt, (they were) very much surprised at the shape of it and carried it home to exhibit to all the bears. So the bear chief made a feast and called all the bears in. (He showed the copper) bracelet to all the bears and (they) very much admired it.... Soon after the bears looked at the bracelet (they) sent the woman directly back to her own family with the little bear cubs and everybody (in her village) wondered very much about the woman. End.

67 Pole 7. Bear cubs. (National Museums of Canada, 67985.)

68 Pole 7. Bear Mother, Xpisunt, at the base of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65268.)

Emmons's note on this pole (1909-10) indicates that the name Xpisunt is derived from *sunt* (summer) and refers to the fact that the ground is partly bare and partly covered with snow. This may refer to her position in the snow on the mountain while her brother, who was searching for her below on the mountainside, was on bare ground (see the story with pole 6).

This pole was re-erected by the 1924-26 project on the riverbank, but was moved by the Gitwangak band to the centre of the village after the 1936 flood.



69 Half-Bear (pole 8) as it appeared in 1915 with the original eagle on top. (Photo by Harlan I. Smith; National Museums of Canada, 34600.)

Half-Bear
(No. 8)

This pole, about 50 feet high, is called "Half-bear" or "Xpe-semi" (Smith 1926). It was erected in commemoration of Liginehle of the house of Sqayen (IV.D.2) of the Eagle phratry of Gitwangak. The holder of the title Sqayen in 1925 was Mrs. Maggie Wells. Smith claimed it was erected about 1900, but since it appears in O'Dwyer's panoramic photograph of the village in 1899, and it appears somewhat weathered even then, it must have been erected no later than 1895.

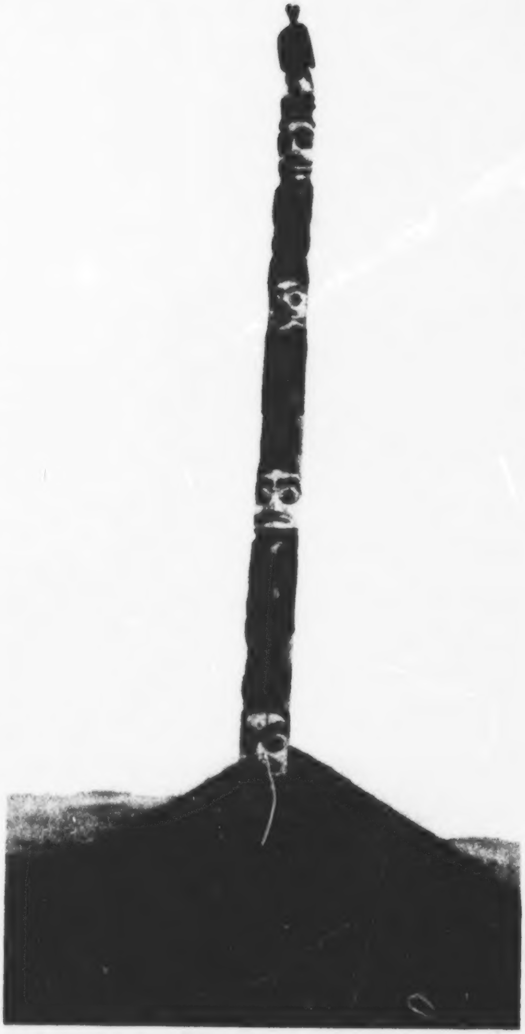
The pole was carved by Negwetsegel (IV.A.6a) of the house of Thaku of the Frog-Raven phratry of Gitwangak.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Eagle *(skik)*. The original eagle was much decayed and was replaced in 1925 by a simpler one carved by Bob Sampare.
2. White marten *(mashat)*, held in the talons of the eagle. It is draped over a conical hat worn by the figure below, in the fashion of ermine tassels of a chief's hat, that is, a special perogative.
3. Half-Bear or Bear's-Den-Person (Xpasmax). This human-looking figure is probably the bear chief in his human form. The hole in his abdomen represents the bear's den on the mountainside.
4. Eagle *(skik)*, the clan crest again.
5. Beaver *(tsemolih)*. Its ears virtually touch the eagle's talons. The beaver grasps the cottonwood stick, with its tail turned up on its body in the conventional way.
6. Half-Bear (Xpasmax), is the same figure as No. 3 on this pole. The hands with only two fingers are most unusual.
7. Split beaver *(palxumtsemolih)*, are two sides of a beaver joined at the head (see the pole 6 story).
8. Half-Bear (Xpasmax), the Bear's-Den-Person again.

C.V. Smith, a local merchant and artifact dealer from Hazelton, provided the following story for the figures on this pole (H.I. Smith, 1926: Pole 8).

> Liginehle was a chief who "came of a family of great hunters." His family "killed an eagle with a bow and arrow and adopted" the eagle "as their crest. The Skeena river, before the flood, was a



70 Half-Bear as it was restored in 1926 with a replacement eagle. (National Museums of Canada, 68055.)

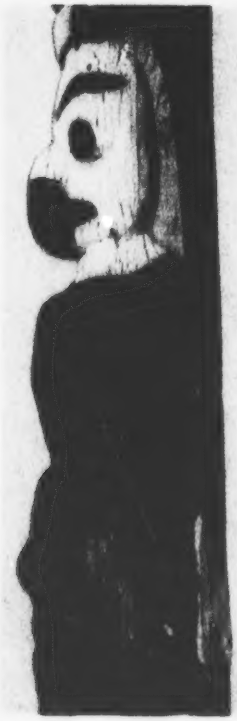
71 Pole 8. The upper eagle, with restored head, with the white marten in its talons. (National Museums of Canada, 67988.)

72 Pole 8. The first Half-Bear or Bear's-Den-Person, with doorway in its stomach. (National Museums of Canada, 67996.)

small creek [dammed] across at frequent intervals by beavers."

"Liginehle's ancestors, assisted by the Kitselas clan killed the giant king of the beavers and cut him in two and divided him between them, so that both clans still have the beaver on their crest."

A chief of the Wolf phratry had a beautiful daughter named Hpeesunt and two sons, one named Akteeih. Hpeesunt mocked at the bears. For her punishment the bears in human form overtook her, but one of their leaders, a grizzly bear, protected her by marrying her, and took her to his den on the mountain side. She changed into a bear and bore him twin sons, half human and half bear. Meanwhile her brothers constantly searched for her. The bear told her that her people would come and kill him, and he taught her two songs saying that the hunters should always be respectful to the bears they kill and sing the songs. At last she saw Akteeih searching for her on the mountain far below. She squeezed a handful of snow into a hard ball and threw it down. He picked it up and observed the impression of her fingers. He then looked for her, and found her in the bear's den. He killed the bear and took his sister and her bear children home. The children behaved like bears part of the time, and they helped their uncles in hunting by directing them to the bears. They frequently pointed to a column of smoke in the mountains and



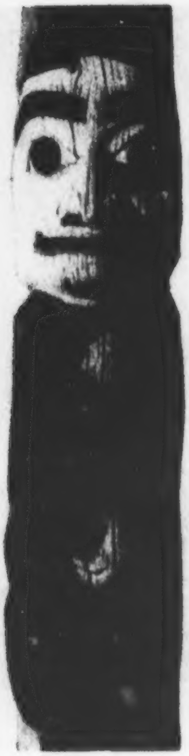
73 Pole 8. The second eagle. (National Museums of Canada, 67994.)

74 Pole 8. Beaver gnawing a stick. (National Museums of Canada, 67998.)

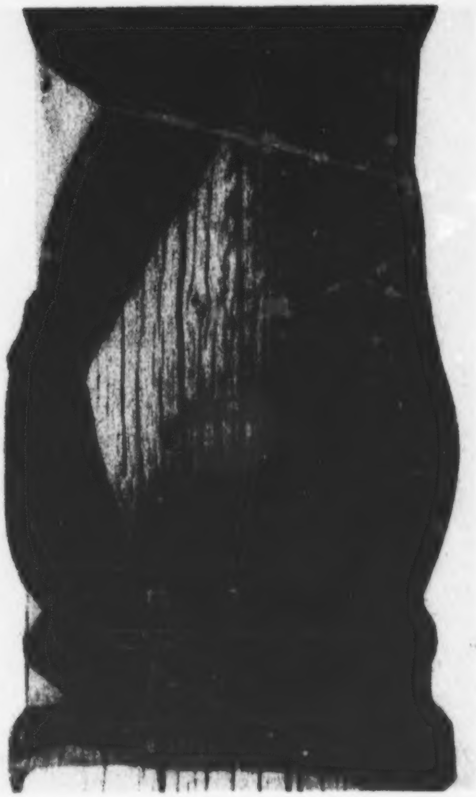
said that is grandfather's house. Akteeih would then go to the place where he always found a bear's den. This help is what enabled the family of Akteeih to be prosperous in snaring bears.

"The snow-white Marten which is extremely rare, was also caught in a deadfall and added to their crest. In connection with another clan they killed an enormous bear. As the other clan wanted the bear for a crest, Legenetla's family conceded it to them, but have the figure of a man on their totem-pole to represent the bear. With holes to represent the bear's den."

Although this pole was leaning and ready to fall by 1925, it was restored and re-erected on a cement base in the same position on the riverbank by H.I. Smith's team (Fig. 77). The villagers moved it to the centre of the town after the 1936 flood.

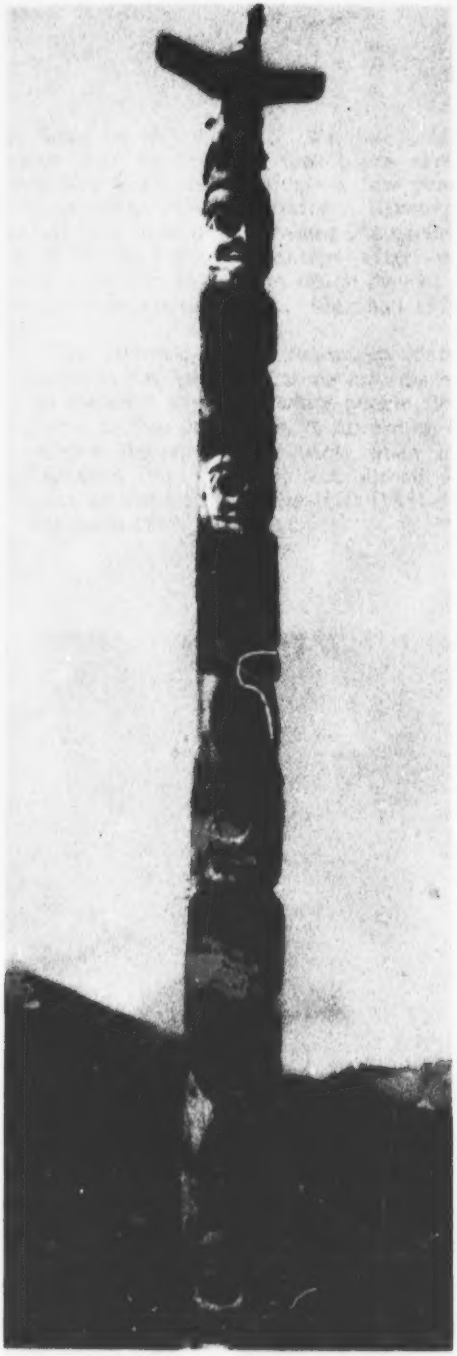


75 Pole 8. The second Half-Bear, with bear's den in its stomach. (National Museums of Canada, 67995.)

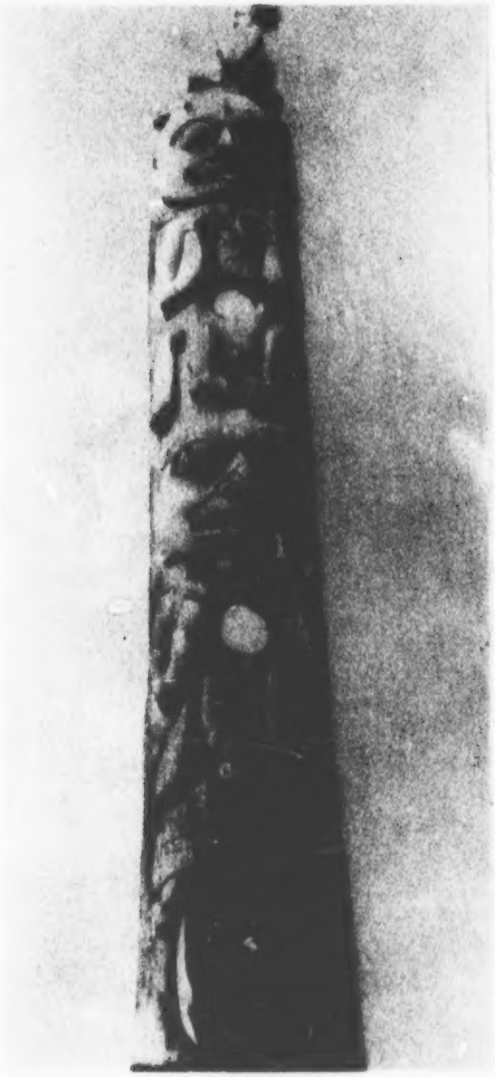


76 Pole 8. Split beaver. (National Museums of Canada, 67999.)

77 Pole 8. Half-Bear or Bear's-Den-Person at the base of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 68064.)



78 Half-Bear as it appears today with a completely new eagle with spread wings at the top. (Tourism British Columbia, 9894.)



79 Bear's-Den-Person (pole 9) as it appeared in its original condition and position some time before 1910. The chief in the foreground was perhaps Sqayen. (Courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN1379.)

Bear's-Den-Person
(No. 9)

The pole Bear's-Den-Person (Xpasmax) is probably the most ancient and interesting monument of Gitwangak. It was erected, according to a number of informants, around 1840. Harlan I. Smith calculated, from the age of his informant Mrs. Maggie Wells, Sqayen (IV.D.2), that it was erected at the time of her mother's marriage. Mrs. Wells, the youngest of that family, was 53 in 1925. Smith (1926: Pole 10) therefore calculated that the pole was at least 85 years old at that time.

Barbeau claimed that the pole

> was one of the first erected at Kitwanga, many years after the people had moved down from the Ta'awdzep fortress.... Chief Semedeek (from seventy to eighty years of age [in 1925]) does not remember when it was erected. It stood there when he was a boy.... We may safely conclude that its erection took place about seventy-five years ago, perhaps a few years earlier, possibly somewhat later. Kitwanga could not have been on its present site earlier, since it is its second location after the removal from the Ta'awdzep, which may have taken place as late as 1831.... (Barbeau 1929: 142).

> The removal from Ta'awdzep dates back, in the opinion of some informants, to the time when the white people first came to this country; and, according to Alfred Sinclair, to the time when the Hudson's Bay Company established its post at the mouth of the Nass (1831-33) (Barbeau 1929: 142, n. 1).

80 Bear's-Den-Person was very old and decrepit in 1925, as seen in this photograph by H.I. Smith in September of that year. (National Museums of Canada, 64318.)

81 Bear's-Den-Person as restored by H.I. Smith in 1926 on its original location. (National Museums of Canada, 68708.)

82 The original Bear's-Den-Person as restored and re-erected in the centre of the village circa 1942. (Tourism British Columbia, 7944.)

Emmons (1909-10: note) provided some important commentary on the pole:

> One column and possibly the oldest or certainly one of the oldest, as an oval hole at the base (In Tsimshian tongue "Spissam mer" Xpe-semi Bear's hole). It is said to have stood directly in front of the house when first erected. The oval aperture formed the doorway of the house. This was the house of the chief of the Lagh-skeek family.

It was erected in memory of Liginehle, the chief of the family of Sqayen (IV.D.2) of the Eagle family of Gitwangak. It was 19 feet in length, but no one remembers the name or family of the carver. Originally it served as an entry pole attached to the front of a house with the oval doorway through the wings of the eagle. Barbeau's enthusiasm over this pole is evident (1929: 142):

> The old pole is one of the most valuable relics of the kind on the Skeena. From it we may form a fair idea of what one of the earliest poles looked like, about eighty years ago. It was made from half of a large cedar log, the other half and the core having been removed.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Eagle *(skik)*. This was a separately carved figure which disappeared sometime after 1910 (Figs. 79, 80). It was replaced by an inferior carving perched awkwardly on a flat board on top of the pole. It was the crest of the Eagle phratry.
2. Bear's-Den-Person (Xpasmax), a human-like figure with a hole in its abdomen representing the bear's den.
3. Bear's-Den-Person (Xpasmax) again, as above.
4. Split eagle *(palxumskik)*, with wings hanging down on each side of the ceremonial doorway.

The pole is shown standing to the west (right) of the village in 1899 (Fig. 2). The house once attached to it may have been demolished after the death of the original owner, as practiced elsewhere on the north coast (G. MacDonald 1983). It finally fell in 1912. When found by H.I. Smith in 1924 it had split into two pieces and was much decayed. With the help of his Gitwangak workmen he was able to restore it to a remarkably good state (Fig. 81) and re-erect it on a supporting post. Since it was a doorport with only thin struts on the side to support it and was deeply cracked in many places, it did not remain standing as well as most other poles. It was moved back from the bank after the flood of 1936 and was re-erected (Fig. 82). When I first saw it, it was lying in the grass in much need of attention.

Disaster struck in the summer of 1969 during the totem pole restoration project when one of the workers decided on his own that the piece was beyond repair and burned the pole in a bonfire "to clean up the site" as he told us later. The loss of this monument of national heritage value is a sobering reminder of the destruction that can accompany restoration projects.

83 Dog Salmon (pole 10). One of the finest carvings on the Skeena River, the theme of this pole derives from the Kitselas fortress. The original pole is preserved in the National Museum of Man, Ottawa. (National Museums of Canada, 34593.)

Dog Salmon
(No. 10)

Dog Salmon (Ganis), some 37-1/2 feet in length, was erected about 1860 according to Barbeau (1929: 139). The name of the carver is not remembered. Barbeau speculated (1929: 140) that:

> we are inclined to think that he was from Nass river, possibly from one of the two upper villages (Gitlarhdamks or Gitwinksilk), where this family has relatives and allies. The character of the carving inevitably reminds one of three other fish poles, one of which still stands at Angyedae, on the Nass, another at Kitsalas, and a third formerly standing at Gitlarhdamks. These four poles seem to be approximately of the same age and technique; the fish design is used in the same manner, head-down, and the human beings at the tail are most adroitly half-submerged into the body of the salmon. The sculptural quality of these monuments is so high and the treatment so happy that one is apt to forget the strict limitations of the medium — a straight and slender cedar pole. The unity of treatment and design and the fine decorative sense are hardly surpassed in any other pole on the Skeena, with the possible exception of the other Dog-salmon pole at Kitsalas -- which in some ways at least is the better of the two. Here, as in many poles of the same period, the device of adding parts (in this instance, fins) is effectively resorted to, to reinforce the contour of the design and as a concession to decorative realism.

Dog Salmon was erected in memory of a Chief Tewalas (IV.D.3) of the Eagle phratry of Gitwangak by a successor of the same name. In 1925 Chief Tewalas was Mrs. Augustus Sampare.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Person-with-the-Fish-Spear stands on the tail of a dog salmon. The salmon's tail emerges out of the person's head. Barbeau (1929: 140) thought this represents Gagaotsgan (see the myth given below).
2. Dog salmon *(ganis)*.
3. Split-Person (Staget) holding onto the fin of a second dog salmon, with his head in the mouth of the first salmon.

84 Pole 10. Dog salmon and Person-with-the-Fish-Spear united together at the top of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 64345.)

85 Pole 10. Detail of Person-with-the-Fish-Spear before restoration in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 64351.)

86 Pole 10. The first Split-Person in full face view, showing the split to the nose and the inserted dog-salmon fin. (National Museums of Canada, 64332.)

4. Dog salmon *(ganis)* with two dorsal fins.
5. Split-Person (Staget) in the mouth of the second salmon.

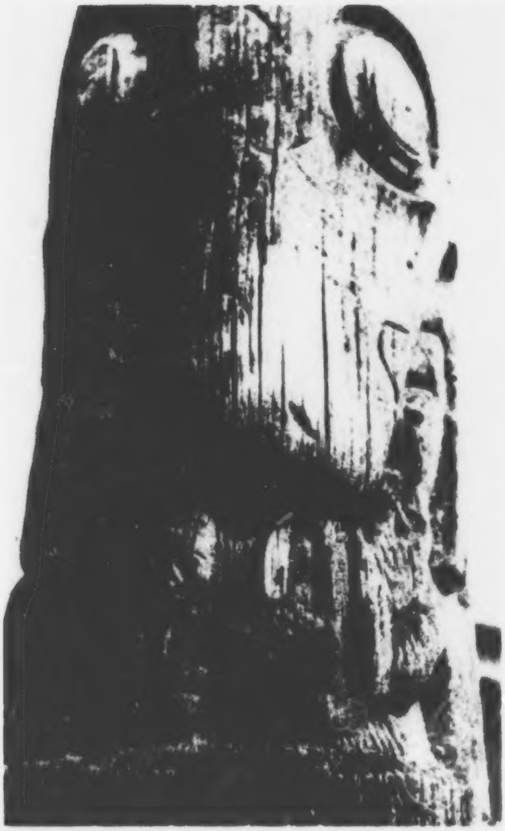
The myths accompanying the figures on the pole were recorded in several accounts that are brought together here.

The figure holding the spear at the top of the pole is that of Chief Tewalas, whom the pole honours. On one occasion (Smith 1926: Pole 10),

> the squirrels led by their chief, the White Squirrel, warred on the Indians of the Skeena River giving them no peace by day or by night. They so harassed the (Skeena) Indians that they over-awed them. When Duwallis (Tewalas), who was not only a noted fisherman but also a renowned warrior, came forward and fought the White Squirrel single handed. He hacked him to death and by so doing brought such dismay to all the squirrels that it ended the war.

It is worth referring here to the fact that special devices were created for battles between chiefly warriors and sometimes turned the tide of battle and so ended the war (G. MacDonald 1979). The white squirrel may have been such a badge of a neighbouring

87 Pole 10. Profile of the first Split-Person before restoration. (National Museums of Canada, 64307.)



88 Pole 10. Front view of the second Split-Person, being swallowed by a second dog-salmon figure. (National Museums of Canada, 64341.)

tribe, displacing their name in this account. However, the device seems to have backfired as the Gitwangak forces were victorious. Unfortunately, there is nothing in this brief account to link this war with the Kitwanga fort, but that conclusion seems inevitable.

The second legend explains more of the crests on the pole (Smith 1926: Pole 10):

> One day Duwallis (Tewalas) ... in spearing a giant dog-salmon, was dragged out of his canoe and taken down to the dog-salmon's village under the waters of the Skeena River.... After spending two years in the dog salmon's village, Duwallis returned to Kitwanga knowing the habits of the dog-salmon so well that he could catch them whenever he wished. Thus he became rich and powerful, but he died fighting bravely against the Indians of Kitselas who split him in two.

There is, of course, no reason to assume the Chief Tewalas referred to in these two episodes is the same individual, but simply persons holding the same title.

Barbeau provided another segment of what was undoubtedly a lengthy family epic (1929: 139).

89 Pole 10. Profile of the second Split-Person. (National Museums of Canada, 65207.)

90 Dog Salmon as it was re-erected in the centre of the village in the 1940s. The flagpole was put back as an essential element of the pole. The shape of the fin at the top was also changed considerably from the 1915 version (Fig. 83). This pole fell down about 1960. (Tourism British Columbia, 7944.)

A young man of Raraotsren's family at Kitsalas, is said in the myth once to have shown particular respect to the dried salmon food of his relatives, and thus to have cured the Salmon chief of an infirmity. The live salmon, in gratitude, appeared to him as human beings in a canoe, at the river's edge, and took him to their home down the river. They led him into three huge houses of the Salmon tribe; on the front of one was painted the Dog-Salmon *(Qanaes)*; on that of the second, the Steelhead-salmon *(Maelit)*, and on that of the third, the Spring-salmon. The salmon in those houses behaved as human beings. When the

91 Detail of Person-with-the-Fish-Spear on the recently recarved Dog Salmon. The pole is awaiting erection at an appropriate feast. (National Museums of Canada.)

time for the salmon run arrived, the young man was provided with a fish garment and, changing into a salmon, he swam up the river with the school of salmon, until he reached the canyon, at the edge of which stood his home village. There his uncle Raraotsren caught a gigantic salmon which he could barely drag out of the water. In its body he discovered his nephew, who had disappeared several moons before. The Dog-salmon thereafter became the family crest. It somehow became the possession of Tewalasu, either through transmission in direct line or later contacts as between kinsmen. The Dog-salmon crest has also been used at times in a dramatic performance (as a [*naxnox*]) given by Tewalasu at Kitwanga.

Dog Salmon was leaning badly by 1925, but was refurbished with a new central support post and re-erected the next year in its original position on the riverbank. It was one of the poles most threatened by the 1936 flood and was moved directly inland and re-erected in the row of poles in the centre of the village. By the 1960s the pole had again fallen and was deteriorating in the long grass.

I arranged with the owner David Wells in 1969 to make a replica of the pole using rubber-moulding and fibreglass-casting techniques being developed at the National Museum at that time. Negotiations to relocate the pole were made with David Wells through the offices of Mrs. Polly Sargent of Hazelton. The original pole remained at Gitwangak and the replica, made in Ottawa, was shipped back in the spring of 1970, three weeks after the death of the owner.

A dilemma faced the inheritors of the pole as to what they could possibly do with two identical-looking old poles. It was resolved by carving them a new copy of the pole in red cedar, using Ksan artists financed by the National Museum of Man. Ksan spoke for the fibreglass version, which was erected at their historic Gitksan village park, and the original pole came to the National Museum of Man in Ottawa, which (with pole 20) now had two Gitwangak poles. The recarved pole has not yet been erected, but will someday take its traditional place, the first of what is hoped will be a number of replicas of original Gitwangak poles.

On-Top-Sits-the-Squirrel
(No. 11)

On-Top-Sits-the-Squirrel (Haniduhltsenlik) was raised just after 1900 by Chief Tewalas (IV.D.3) of the Eagle phratry of Gitwangak to honour a predecessor of the same name. It was carved by Kwinu (III.A.4) of the Frog-Raven phratry of Kitwancool. In 1925 Mrs. Augustus Sampare of Gitwangak held the name Tewalas.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Squirrel *(tsenlik)*.
2. A blank section of pole.
3. A human figure with the head of a marten *(atku)* in its hands.
4. The-Eagle's-Nest (Anluhlkehlskik) or The-Small-Eagle-on-Beams.
5. Starfish *(kamats)*.
6. Human being with starfish on his hands.

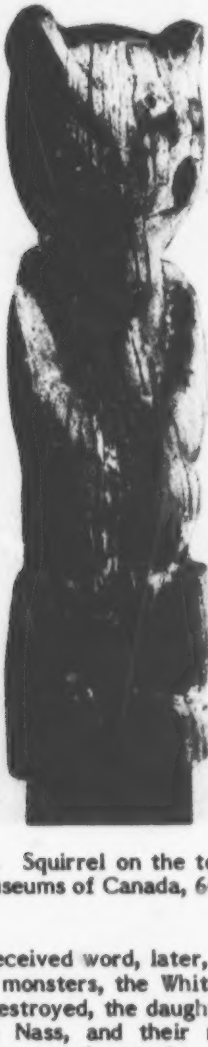
The squirrel crest, according to Harlan I. Smith, was part of the following legend (Smith 1926: Pole 11):

> the squirrels, lead by their chief, the White Squirrel, warred on the Indians of the Skeena River giving them no place by day or night. They so harassed the Indians that at last they overawed them. Then Tewalas, who was not only a noted fisherman but also a renowned warrior, came forward and fought the White Squirrel single handed. He choked him to death and by so doing brought such dismay to all the Squirrel that it ended the war.

Barbeau (1929: 139) gave a different version of this story:

> The Squirrel emblem *(Tsenhlik)* is used only by the two families of Tewalasu of Kitwanga, and of Qawq of Gitlarhdamks, on the upper Nass. Qawq of Gitlarhdamks owes his origin to the household of the same name on the Skeena, and his migration northwards is supposed to have taken place only as a result of the events recounted in the Squirrel myth. The ancestors of both families, at one time, when camping near a salmon-fence at Larh-kunsraerh, on the upper Nass were harassed by repeated apparitions of monster Squirrels, the size of bears. Some, in particular a woman and her two daughters, fled back to the Skeena, and joined their tribe at Gitanraet. When

92 On-Top-Sits-the-Squirrel (pole 11) as it appeared standing in its original location in 1915. (National Museums of Canada, 34595.)



93 Pole 11. Squirrel on the top of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 64362.)

94 Pole 11. Person with the head of a marten in its hands. (National Museums of Canada, 64361.)

they received word, later, that the chief of the monsters, the White-squirrel, had been destroyed, the daughters went back to the Nass, and their mother stayed with her people on the Skeena. Both branches of this family, those of Tewalasu, and of Qawq of the Nass, trace back their ancestry to these women. And they have since claimed the exclusive privilege of using the Squirrel as their distinctive emblem, though they retain as well most of the other crests of their earlier ancestors.

Emmons (1905) recorded another version of the white squirrel story from Alfred Sinclair (Chief Axgawt [IV.A.2]) in 1905:

There was once, not very long ago, a big family camping ... at the Nass River. They built a very big fish trap there, and one day some of them went out to see the fish trap. They saw the big white squirrel lying flat at the edge of the river where the fish trap was built. (It was) watching for someone to come to the fish trap. When they saw the strange thing they were very surprized at the shape of it because it looked like a squirrel. It was very big and white and they ran away from it. The big squirrel got after them but the men rushed into the camp and told everybody. All the families rose up and left their camp and

95 Pole 11. The-Eagle's-Nest (two eagles standing on the rim of the nest). (National Museums of Canada, 64334.)

96 Pole 11. Starfish. (National Museums of Canada, 65230.)

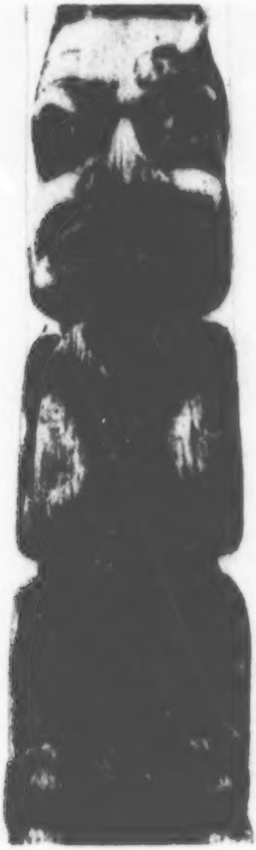
> fled away to the Skeena River. But the big squirrel followed them and some were killed by this fierce animal. Some of them slayed this big squirrel and skinned it. They kept the skin and showed it to all the people of the Skeena River.

All of the three accounts are possibly fragments of a more complex series about the white squirrel.

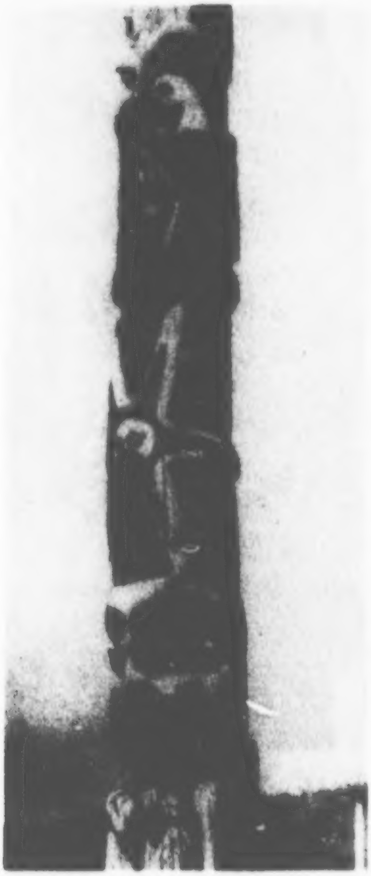
The figure of the man holding the marten in his hands is very similar to the figure holding the soul on pole 21. It is the position in which shaman held souls of their patients, or animal-spirit helpers, and probably has a similar meaning here.

Duff (1949: notes on Tewalas) stated that The-Small-Eagle-on-Beams was an eagle crest, called "Xskegemgalpgan," used on the outside ends of house beams. The ring around the pole on which the two eagles stand may represent either the roof beams or The-Eagle's-Nest, which is another crest of the family.

The starfish is remarkable in that it is not an Eagle crest but belongs to a few Frog-Raven phratry families. It was used here as a signature of one of the carvers of the house of Kwinu, a Frog-Raven of Kitwancool who owned this crest. Smith (1926: Pole II) stated that the carver contributed to the erection of the pole and therefore had the right to carve his crest on it. Smith also claimed that the



97 Pole 11. Person with starfish on palms of hands. (National Museums of Canada, 65230.)



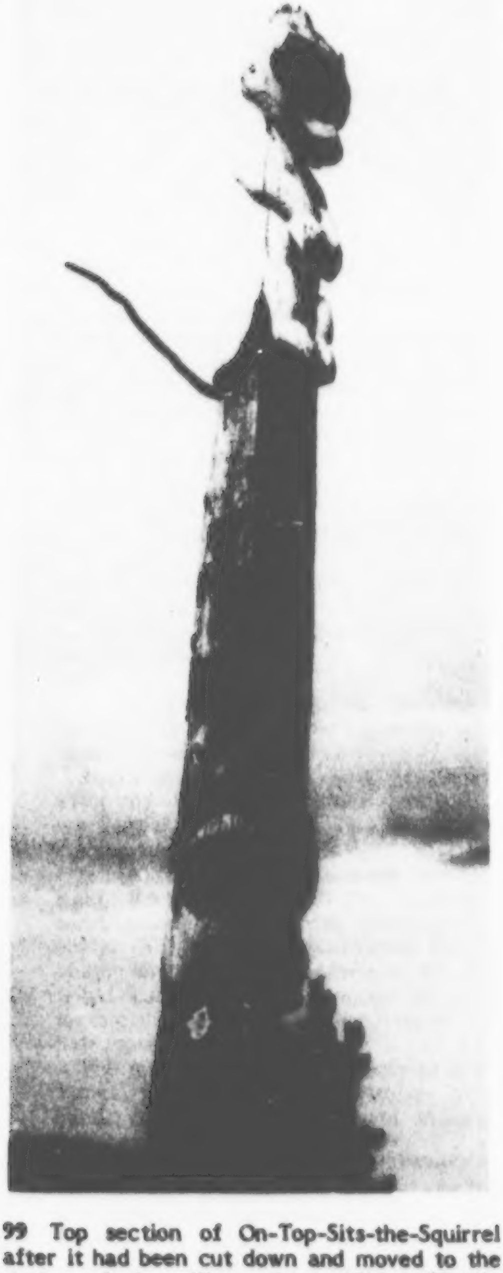
98 Lower section of On-Top-Sits-the-Squirrel as restored in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 45093.)

figure at the base is Kwinu of Kitwancool, a paternal relative of Tewalas, with his starfish crests on his hands.

The carving on the pole is of fair quality, but not as good as many others by Kitwancool carvers. It was considered important to have a tail on the squirrel to distinguish it from other animals, and over the years the photographs show that various curved sticks were stuck into the back of the top figure to represent the squirrel's tail. This pole was originally 41 feet high, but is much shorter today. The lowest three registers of figures were removed about 30 years ago when the pole was moved from the riverbank to the centre of the village.

Harlan I. Smith made a plaster cast of the well-carved human face from the centre of the starfish figure on the pole. The cast is now in the collections of the National Museum of Man.

The figure of the man holding the marten is almost unrecognizable today. The torso of the figure had obviously rotted and was replaced by a new piece but, unfortunately, the marten head between the man's hands was eliminated. Without it the crest figure, at present at the base of the pole, is meaningless.



99 Top section of On-Top-Sits-the-Squirrel after it had been cut down and moved to the centre of the village about 1942. (Public Archives Canada, 112867.)

Halibut
(No. 12)

The earliest reference to this pole is by an informant of G.T. Emmons in 1910 who called it "Halibut" (Emmons 1909-10: Pole 12). He gave the name for halibut as "Ikuk" while Barbeau (1929: 134) called it "Trhoih" *(txoih)*. Barbeau called the pole "Bear's-den" (Xpasmax), but since he called at least three poles by this same name (Nos. 8, 9 and 12), I would favour the native name first recorded by Emmons: Ikuk or Halibut.

The pole, about 40 feet long, was raised in memory of a former Qawq (IV.D.l), of the Eagle phratry of Gitwangak, around 1880. It was carved by Gisaxyis, according to Barbeau (1929: 137), of the Frog-Raven phratry of Gitwangak, a younger brother of Leit (IV.A.4). Chief Semedik (IV.D.la) erected it, but with help from a relative, as noted in the following RCMP report dated 29 November 1928 (Barbeau 1929: 137):

> The following is a voluntary statement given me by Ada Fowler, Indian Woman of Kitwanga, through Interpreter Wallace Morgan.
>
> Begins:
>
> I, Ada Fowler, widow of Alexander Fowler (Kilawa), make the following voluntary statement.
>
> About thirty-six years ago, two years after my daughter Christine was born, my husband, Alexander Fowler, and I commenced the usual tribal customs to erect a totem-pole to the memory of Kakl, the head chief of the Kitwanga band, who had died three years previously. The three years between Kakl's death and the commencement of our tribal customs were occupied in collecting the money for the erection of the pole (totem).
>
> The present Chief, Semideeks of Kitwanga, was in partnership with my husband, Alexander Fowler, both sharing equal expenses.
>
> Quissilla, Salomon Harris' younger brother, now deceased, was employed by Semideeks and Alexander Fowler to cut the pole and carve it.
>
> When the pole was ready to be erected, a big potlatch was held, to which guests were invited from Hazelton, Kit-

100 Halibut (pole 12) standing in the garden of the Hudson's Bay Company factor's residence. (Courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN12973.)

101 Pole 12. Person-with-Drum at the top of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 68358.)

102 Pole 12. Split-Person and Bear's-Den-Person merged together. (National Museums of Canada, 68359.)

seguekla, Hagwelget, and Kispiox. The expense was borne equally by Semideeks and Alexander Fowler (Kilawa). To complete the ceremony Alexander Fowler paraded the village dressed in the costume of the deceased Kaki's rank, which consisted of the Eagle headdress and robes. Semideeks was not present in the parade. At the conclusion of this parade Semideeks threatened Kilawa with a gun, and Kilawa, Alexander Fowler, having just turned Christian, wishing to avoid trouble, allowed Semideeks to assume the chieftainship.

About the year 1907 or 1908, Semideeks cut and erected his own totem-pole in front of his house at Kitwanga where it still stands, and all the chiefs agreed to let Semideeks have the head chieftainship. Kilawa did not assist in the erection of this pole.

About October the 20, 1928, I, Ada Fowler, noticed that the totem-pole, which I have a claim on, was moved to the lot at the Hudson's Bay Company's store. I did not give my consent to this. I wanted the totem-pole left in the village where it was originally erected. I

103 Pole 12. Person holding a halibut in each hand. (National Museums of Canada, 68360.)

104 Pole 12. Split eagle. (National Museums of Canada, 68361.)

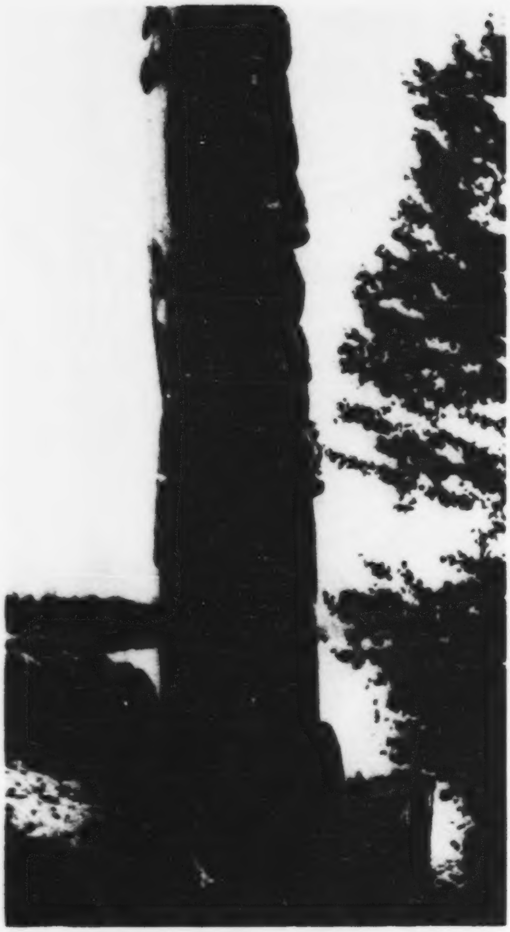
> do not want to sell it at all. I want it moved back to where it was taken from.
>
> her
> Sgd. Ada X Fowler
> mark. Ends.

Barbeau's documentation of this pole is especially thorough. It appears to have had special interest to him and he made special reference to its quality (1929: 137-38):

> It is among the best at Kitwanga. Its style and character, its bold high relief, belong to a period when poles were essentially carvings, paint being used as a mere accessory for effect. The eyes and eyebrows were painted black, the nostrils and lips red; and the feathers of the Eagle may have been painted white. The figure of the Eagle does not seem as genuine as the others; and the carver may have had in mind to imitate the American Eagle.

The figures on the Halibut pole, from the top, are:

1. Person-with-Drum (Getemanuhl).
2. Split-Person or Half-Man (Staget), merging with Bear's-Den-Person (Xpasmax), a human-like figure with a hole in its stomach which represented the bear's den.



105 Pole 12. The lower Person-with-Drum, holding a mask or a crest in its hand. (National Museums of Canada, 65213.)

106 Pole 12. Back of the lower Person-with-Drum showing a rare example of carving on figures extending around the back of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65214.)

3. Person holding a halibut.
4. The halibut *(txołh)* are held in each hand of the figure below Bear's-Den-Person.
5. Split eagle *(palxumskłk)*.
6. Person-with-Drum (Getemanuhl), holding a crest or mask in his hands.

As to the last figure, Barbeau observed (1929: 134):

> The identity of this emblem is not remembered; it is probably one of the three family crests, Bear-headdress *(Kaidem'ol)*, Weasel-headdress *(Kaidem-meksłhl)* or White-marten *('Masha't)*; or it may represent, according to a different opinion, the mask of Indakawt

> (To-nurse a child), owned as a personal name in this family.

Person-with-Drum at the top of the pole is not a crest according to Barbeau (1929: 136). Instead, it is a ceremonial privilege inherited in this family for many generations. In some depictions, as on pole 14, it consists of a box drum, with a human figure on it, that was used to accompany ceremonial songs.

Split-Person is a crest derived from the warrior Nekt, discussed previously. The Bear's-Den-Person is the same as that on poles 8 and 9.

The halibut and eagle crests are among the most ancient crests of the Gitwangak Eagles, according to Barbeau (1929: 135), and were already in the possession of their Tlingit ancestors when they migrated south from the district of Howkan, Alaska. Barbeau stated (1929: 135):

> As the result of a feud between Eagle and Wolf clans, at Na'a (in Alaska), the Eagles were forced to take to flight. The traditions give an account of how they built a raft, on which they placed their emblems, Fin-of-the-Shark, the big Mother-eagle of stone *('Nawt)*, the small Stone-eagle, and the Eagle's egg *(Hlkemat)*, a large round stone. Several members of the clan had raised eagles as pets, which had their nests on the corner posts of the original house in Alaska. These pets guided their masters while they migrated along the seacoast.... In the course of the Eagle clan's migrations southwards along the coast, Hlaray, the leader, was swallowed by the Supernatural-halibut *(Narhnarom-trhao)*, as he was swimming offshore in an attempt to reach a canoe set adrift by the tide. After the monster was killed, his relatives discovered that its body was entirely covered with human faces. The Halibut from that moment became their crest.

It is notable that both the halibut and eagle crests are shown in split representation on this pole. Barbeau (1929: 135-36) speculated that

> its resemblance to the Russian imperial escutcheon is striking enough to suggest the presumption of its foreign origin. The Russian cossacks visited the Tlingit country very early. And the Russian crest quite possibly may have been adopted at an early date by one of the leading native families.

Barbeau was much impressed by the possible link of double eagles in Northwest Coast art to the Russian imperial prototype and wrote a manuscript (Barbeau n.d.) on the subject which was never published. Double-headed or double-bodied birds sharing a single head are common in pre-Columbian textiles from Peru and appear to represent a shamanic icon of the birds which guard the doors through which the sun gains entrance and exit to the cosmic house (G. MacDonald 1981). The style of the bird carving led Barbeau to speculate (1929: 138) that "the figure of the Eagle does not seem as genuine as the others; and the carver may have had in mind to imitate the American Eagle." The strong horizontal and vertical patterning of the feathers support this suggestion.

The origin of the crest held by Person-with-Drum has several possibilities, depending on the crest or mask in the hands of the figure at the pole base. Barbeau stated (1929: 136):

> The Weasel and the Bear headdresses *(Kaidem-meksihl, Kaidem'ol)* also go back to the time when the Eagles and the Wolves were living together at Na'a, among the Tlingit, on the Alaskan coast. The Weasel-headdress, according to the same traditions, was the ceremonial head-gear which the chief of the Eagles, Hlarae, wore in a memorable single combat with the Wolf chief, whose own headdress was the Bear, one of his main emblems. The bear headdress fell to the Eagle clan as a result of the victory of their chief over his rival. It has been the property of their descendants ever since. The other uses of the Bear in the list of Eagle crests, such as the Bear's den *(Rhpe-saemlh)* and the Clawmarks-of-the-Bear *(Kahlaqs)* may also go back to the same incident. In other words, they may have been conquered along with the Bear headdress from the Wolf clan, to whom they still belong in various forms. Else, they may have been obtained at a later date from other Wolf families, with whom this Eagle clan remained associated in the Skeena River Villages, even after their ancient feud in Alaska.
>
> The White-marten *('Masha't)* is not so ancient as the others. It apparently was assumed as a crest by the members of

this family when they lived at Gitsemraelem, farther down the Skeena. The manner of its inception is not distinctly remembered. According to Semedeek, his ancestors there killed several monsters or supernatural beings -- Bears, Beavers, Martens -- and adopted them as emblems. Kwalaesu's nephew, a lucky hunter, discovered a large tree in the forest, the limbs of which were covered with black martens. In the tree was a *kanaeurh*, their hole; and in the hole dwelt the White-marten. The hunter killed this supernatural animal and made it into a crest....

Nursing-a-child, on the other hand, is a personal name with a mask [*naxnox*] belonging to this household. When the name of the fictive character Nursing-a-child is assumed by a new holder in a ceremony, he dramatizes it and appears in the feast house carrying a young child in his arms (in reality a wood carving); he nurses it and sings to it as if to keep it from crying while he slowly proceeds around the house.

The Halibut pole stood at the eastern end of the poles on the riverbank at Gitwangak until it was blown down in a windstorm in 1925. It was re-erected, supported by a concrete base, on the same spot in 1926. It was moved to the lot of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1928, as noted in Ada Fowler's statement to the RCMP. The pole was moved some time after 1962 from west of the store to its present location east of the store. It was in good state of preservation in the summer of 1979.

Man-crushing Log
(No. 13)

Man-crushing Log was raised by Jim Laganitz, or Hlengwah (IV.A.1), of the Frog-Raven phratry of Gitwangak in honour of Xstamgemgipik, a personal name in the family of Axgawt (IV.A.2) of the same phratry, at the time when Hlengwah was promoted to the rank of chief, about 1870 (Barbeau 1929: 53).

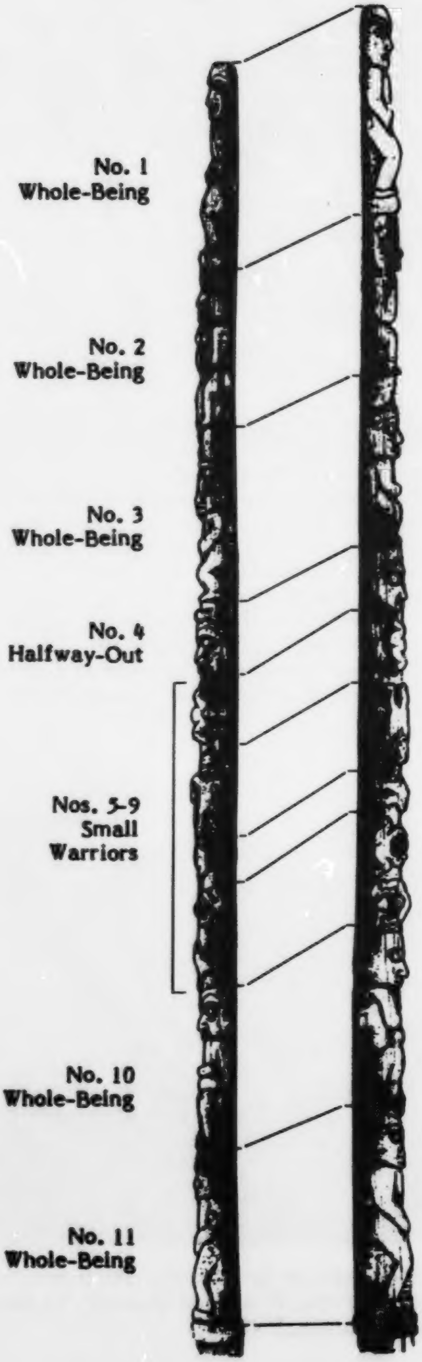
The pole was carved by Yaxyaq (III.A.5) of the Frog-Raven phratry of Kitwancool. Barbeau explained (1929: 54 n. 4) an unusual feature of the pole: "though of the same phratry, this carver belonged to a family not related to that of Larahnitz."

Smith (1926: Pole 13) claimed that this pole once "stood about a hundred feet further up stream close to the river bank, and that it was cut down about 1890 to save it from being undermined by the river." It was never erected again although it did undergo conservation in 1926. The pole was originally about 60 feet long, but has broken into several parts, only one of which survives.

The pole appears to be very ancient, but this is undoubtedly due to the fact that it has lain on the ground for the past 90 years. Smith elevated it off the ground during the restoration projec[illegible] 1924-26, but the protective shed he built over it did not last more than a decade, according to photographic evidence, and the pole once again lay in the long grass. It is in very poor condition at present, but could be restored with modern conservation techniques for indoor display.

The detailed description of the pole by Barbeau (1929: 49) is incomplete, as he noted (1929: 49 n. 3). Some of the figures had broken off the pole, but he was not sure how many. Fortunately, Smith took a detailed photographic record of the pole and all of the fragments, from two sides, which permitted me to make composite images of the pole (Fig. 108). Although there is some distortion in the relative size of the individual figures, due to the lack of a precise distance from the camera to the pole for each shot, there is little problem in correlating the figures with each other and with the 11 figures Smith recorded. Fourteen sequential photographs and numerous miscellaneous shots cover every aspect of the pole and would permit the accurate reconstruction of the entire pole.

107 This is one of the few overall views of Man-crushing Log (pole 13) after restoration, since it was restored under a shed that obscured the pole until the shed was removed in the 1950s. (Photo by W. Duff; courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN8705.)



The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Whole-Being or Whole-Man or All-One-Person (Maxkyawl), standing with arms clasped under its stomach.
2. Same figure as above, apparently seated with arms held up in front of its chest with hands clenched under its chin.
3. Same figure again, with hands over its stomach as in the first figure.
4. Halfway-Out (Gamdepxsetu), a large human face.
5. A warrior from the seacoast in a squatting position.
6. Two warriors, one right side up on the right side of the pole and the other upside down on the left.
7. A warrior lying in an extended horizontal position around the pole.
8. Two warriors in squatting positions lying horizontally with heads touching at the centre of the pole.
9. A warrior lying horizontally on the pole, in the opposite direction to the topmost warrior.
10. Whole-Being (Maxkyawl), seated with arms folded horizontally above its stomach.
11. Whole-Being (Maxkyawl), standing with hands together over the genital area.

The crests on Man-crushing Log refer to episodes of war involving the warrior Nekt or his warrior ancestors. Five figures, which cover two-thirds of the length of the pole, represent variations of the Whole-Being crest, on which Barbeau commented (1929: 50):

> The Whole-being crest (called *Marhkyawl*, among the Gitksan, and *Trhahkawlk*, among the Tsimsyan) is also ancient, since it belongs in common to the three branches of the clan in the Kitwanga, the Kitsalas, and the Gitsees tribes. Chief Hlengwah gave it first in his list as the most important or characteristic. Its origin as a carved figure on a pole is accounted for in two narratives. The first, from Hlengwah himself, explains how it once surged out of the sea as part of the supernatural Snag. Part of this clan, at that time, was known under the name of *Mastsenaanurh*, and formed

108 Man-crushing Log (pole 13) as reconstructed from field photographs by H.I. Smith, 1925. (Drawing by G. MacDonald.)

part of the now extinct Gitwilksebae tribe, whose home was above Lakelse and below the canyon on the Skeena. The warriors of this clan went to war against the Nawade (Nawittee) coast tribe, above Bellabella. On their way, crossing a lake, they discovered the supernatural Snag-of-the-water *(Kanemtsem'aus)*. Their canoes surrounded it, and repeated attempts were made to pull it out of the water. When they finally succeeded, they beheld a complete human figure carved at the foot of the Snag. And they gave it the name of *Marhkyawl*, "Whole-man."

The Halfway-Out crest, according to Barbeau (1929: 47), refers "to the Kitamat villager whom Naeqt stabbed and cut nearly in half, and who ran off into the water up to his waist." The position of this single head at the top of Man-crushing Log suggests it might not represent Halfway-Out but be a device for humanizing the log roller.

The seven human figures on the pole (figures 5-9 listed above) represent the warriors from Kitimat and elsewhere on the coast who attacked the Taawdzep and were killed by the rolling log. With the exception of figure 5, the seven warriors are a symetrically arranged composition covering the surface of Man-crushing Log. All of the warriors are in horizontal or upside-down positions which indicate that they are dead, except one (6, right figure) whose arms and legs are in awkward positions to suggest death.

Although human figures are common on Gitksan poles relative to other northwest coast tribes, it is unusual to have as many as 13 human figures on a single pole with no animal crests at all. The composition of the pole appears to have been carefully worked out to provide a feeling of symmetry. In this regard, the top (1), middle (3) and bottom (11) of the Whole-Being figures are in the same standing position with hands over the genital areas. The intermediate Whole-Beings are both seated, but have their hands in intermediate (10) or upright (2) positions.

The composition of this pole is far better than the carving. The faces are all well carved but the sides of the figures and background spaces are roughly adzed.

109 As-found view of Man-crushing Log in 1925 before restoration. (National Museums of Canada, 65094.)

110 Pole 13. Whole-Being (figure 1), very fragmentary. (National Museums of Canada, 65087.)

111 Pole 13. Whole-Being (figure 2), much deteriorated. (National Museums of Canada, 65093).

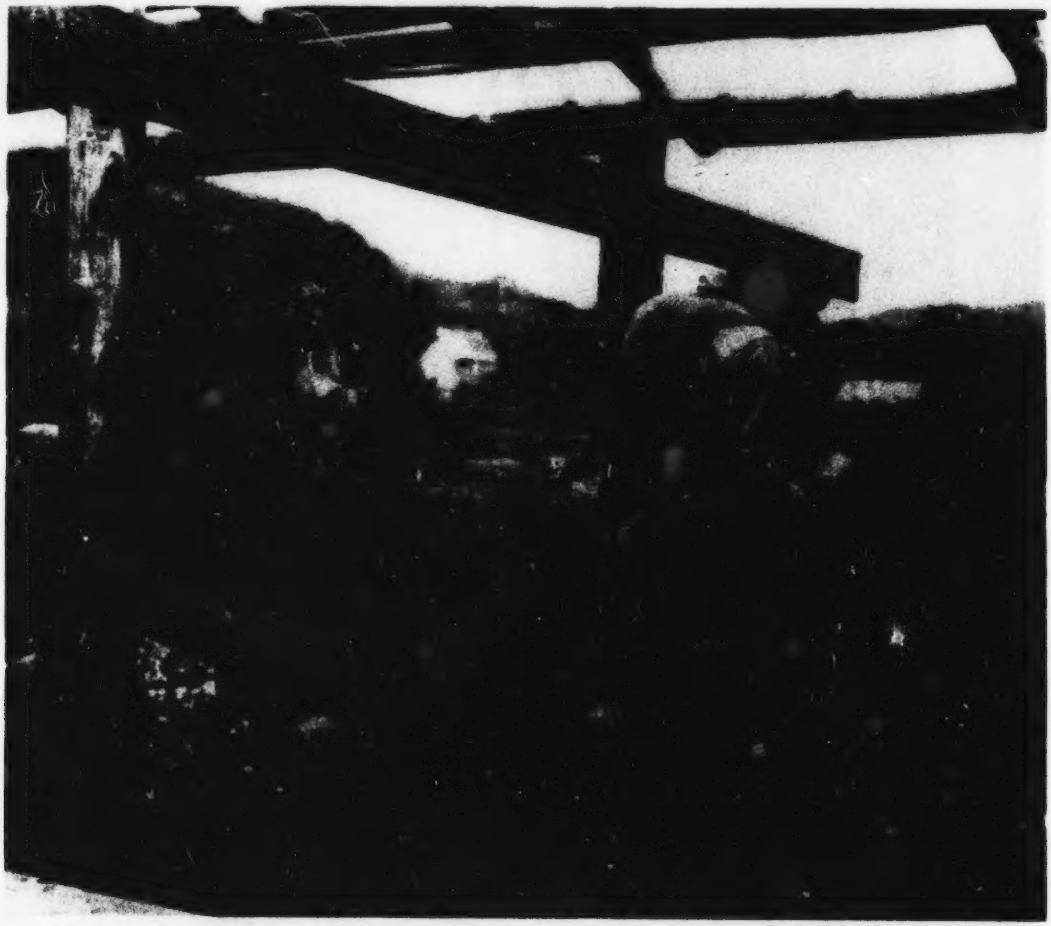
112 Pole 13. Head of Halfway-Out (figure 4) at bottom and Whole-Being (figure 3) at top. (National Museums of Canada, 65092.)

113 Pole 13. Crushed warriors and Halfway-Out head (figure 4). (National Museums of Canada, 65091.)

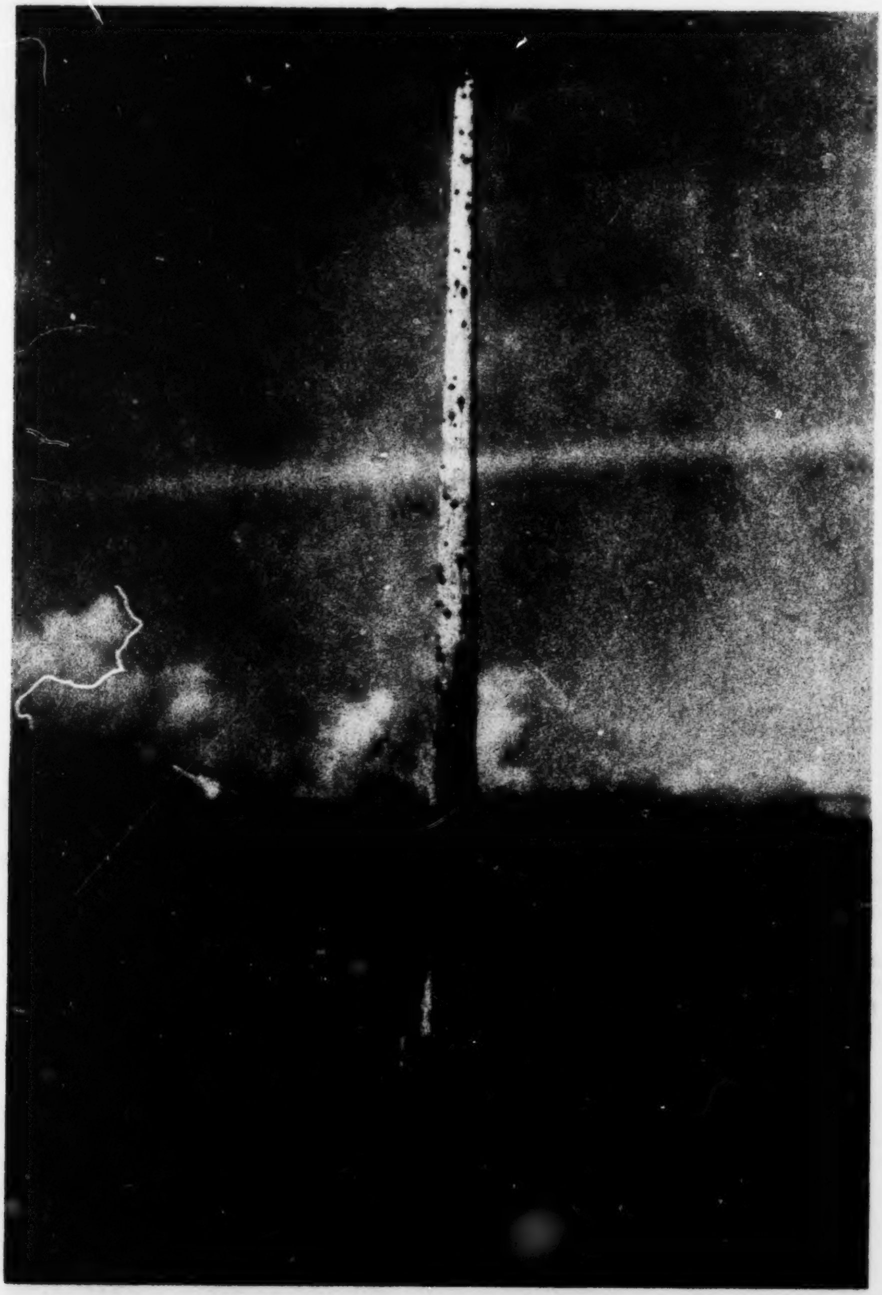
114 Pole 13. Various warrior figures (5-9) crushed by the rolling logs of the Kitwanga fort defences. (National Museums of Canada, 65090.)

115 Pole 13. Whole-Being (figure 10) with arms folded over its stomach. (National Museums of Canada, 65089.)

116 Pole 13. Whole-Being (figure 11) at the base of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65088.)



117 Carvers from Gitwangak working on the restoration of Man-crushing Log in 1926. The frame for the protective shed has just been erected. (National Museums of Canada, 65135.)



118 Drum-Hangs-On (pole 14) with the story of the eagle's flight from Alaska. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1924; National Museums of Canada, 59705.)

Drum-Hangs-On
(No. 14)

Drum-Hangs-On (Hanianuhl) is the second pole of Semedik (IV.D.1a) of the Eagle phratry. He raised it in 1907 or 1908 (according to Ada Fowler) in honour of Sqayen (IV.D.2) of Gitwangak, two years after the latter's death. It was carved by Gakl (III.A.8) of the Frog-Raven phratry of Kitwancool, and was about 60 feet high (Smith 1926: Pole 14).

Barbeau contrasted this pole with No. 12, its predecessor, to mark the decline in pole carving on the Skeena River after the end of the 19th century. He stated (1929: 138):

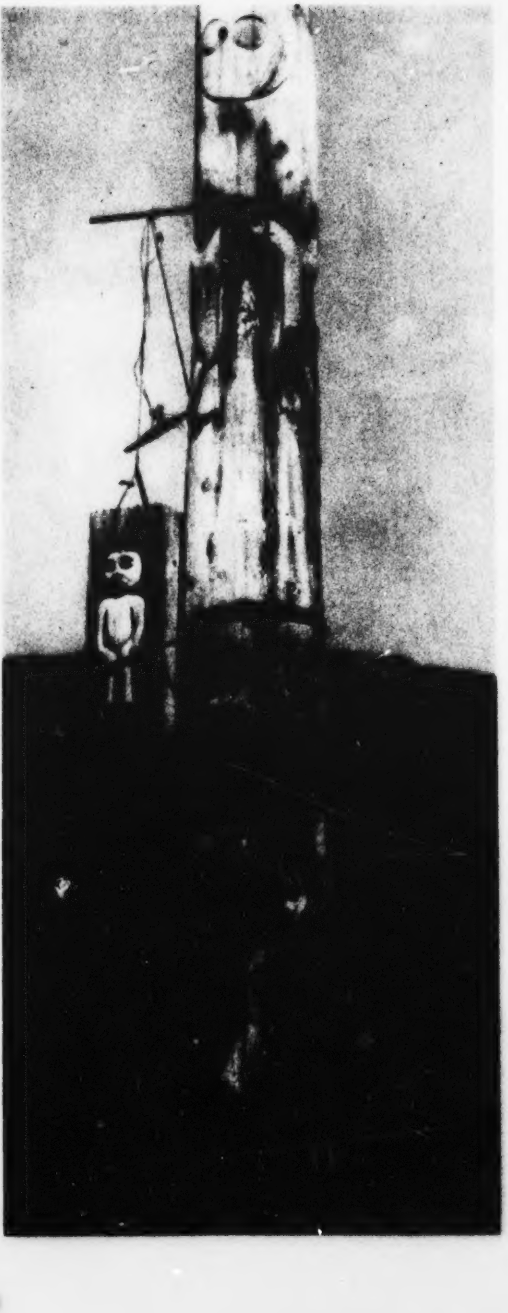
> Although the few carved figures on the newer pole are good enough, they belong to the more recent type introduced by Hlamee of Gitwinlkul, after paint began to replace carving as a means of expression. The figures as a result are thinner -- except for the Eagle at the top -- more conventional, and far less interesting.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Eagle *(skłk)*, a separate carving on the top.
2. Claw-Marks-of-the-Bear (Kahlaks), incised along the top section of the shaft.
3. Halibut *(txołh)*, engraved on pole, head down.
4. Split eagle *(palxumskłk)*.
5. Bear's-Den-Person (Xpasmax), with a hole in its abdomen.
6. Person-with-Drum (Getemanuhl), an actual box drum.

The first five crests have been discussed in the text for pole 12. The attached drum is quite unusual. Smith commented (1926: Pole 14) that

> hanging on the western side of this totem-pole is ... a wooden drum.... Such drums were formerly made of red cedar bent at three corners and pegged or sewed at the fourth. This, however, is nailed together like a white-man's box.



119 Detail of Drum-Hangs-On in memory of Sqayen. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1924; National Museums of Canada, 59703.)

Drum-Hangs-On was originally erected in front of Semedik's house (Fig. 118), on the opposite side of the road, facing the Skeena River. It still stands in the same spot but has been rotated 180 degrees to face the road. Unfortunately, the drum has been lost and the eagle head(s) that protruded as a separate piece from the pole has been replaced by a new and much inferior carving. The pole no longer retains the uniqueness and charm that it had formerly.

Thunderbird
(No. 15)

The Thunderbird (Giludal) pole is 26 feet high and was erected about 1907 in memory of Halus (IV.A.3) of the Frog-Raven phratry by two relatives, an old woman named Senantus and the "brother" of Halus, Tawalih (Barbeau 1929: 56). The carver of this pole is not remembered, but the quality of the carving is memorable.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Thunderbird (Giludal), a special crest name for the thunderbird.
2. Frog or flying frog *(waxas)*.
3. Frog or flying frog *(waxas)*.
4. Whole-Being (Maxkyawl).

The thunderbird crest is usually associated with the Fireweed phratry rather than with the Frog-Raven; however, this is a special type of thunderbird with a special name: Giludal. It may have derived from a *naxnox* mask used in dramatic performances. One such mask in this house (Barbeau 1929: 51) has a long beak cut in sections that are mounted on a metal spring that was released at the same time that guns were discharged to represent thunder. Or, according to Barbeau (1929: 51-52), "it may go back to the time when Larahnitz (or Hlengwah's) ancestors were still part of Qawm's family at Kitsalas.... According to another account ... it is one of the crests conquered by Naeqt at Kitamat, on the seacoast." Barbeau described the house of the chief of Kitimat whom Nekt had conquered (1929: 36-37):

> The chief's house was a very unusual one, quite large, with beautiful carvings inside. The beams in the house were carved like canoes. Naeqt inquired from the young woman, his prisoner, "How does your uncle call this carving." She answered, "He calls this Just-bark *(Qalmas)*." At the four corners of the house were posts that went through the

120 Thunderbird (pole 15) with the special war-trophy crests of the warrior Nekt at the top and bottom, as it appeared in 1915. (National Museums of Canada, 34601.)

121 Pole 15. Thunderbird or Giludal. The long, recarved beak has been removed. (National Museums of Canada, 65099.)

122 Pole 15. Upper flying frog. (National Museums of Canada, 65098.)

roof, at the upper end of which were figures of men. Naeqt again inquired, "How does your uncle call these carvings on the posts?" She answered, "The name is All-people *(Marhgyet)*." The rafters of the house went out through the eaves; on the end of each were carved faces of children, looking downwards with their hair hanging down. He inquired again, "How does your uncle call these carvings?" She replied, "He calls them Worth-while-looking-at *(Kwun'alralsu)*."

123 Pole 15. Lower flying frog. (National Museums of Canada, 65097.)

124 Pole 15. Whole-Being. (National Museums of Canada, 65096.)

Outside the door there was a large totem pole. He asked her the name of the figure at the top. It was a remarkable carving: as soon as anybody walked near the pole, the bird waved its wings and moved its head. He inquired, "How does your uncle call this bird on the end of the totem pole?" She replied, "He calls it Live-eagle *(Dedilaem-rhskyaek)!*" Naeqt took all these names and crests *(ayuks)* as his own.... And he returned to his village on the Skeena.

125 Thunderbird pole showing the prominent, recarved beak of the topmost figure. (National Museums of Canada, 59587.)

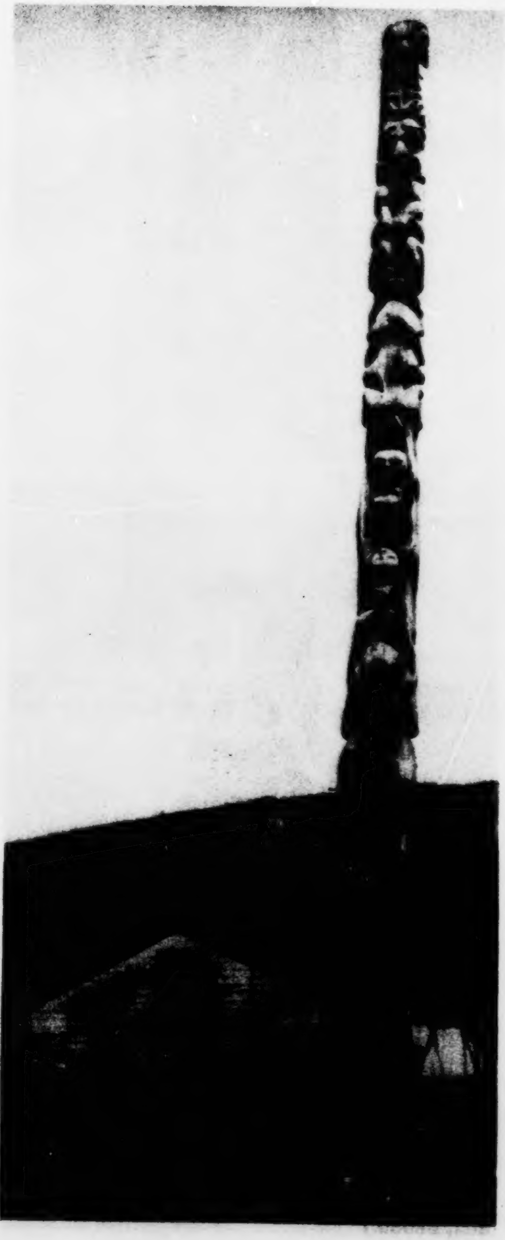
Whereon-Climb-Frogs
(No. 16)

Whereon-Climb-Frogs (Gandeptahl), about 40 feet in length, was carved about 1900 to 1905. It was erected in memory of Taxtsux, of the family of Lelt (IV.A.4), by Lelt and Gibumandaw. It was carved by Kwawdzebax, one of Lelt's nephews of the family of Haku (IV.A.5) of the Frog-Raven phratry of Gitwangak.

Representatives of ten Skeena and Nass River villages attended the erection of the pole. Ten bales of blankets (ten blankets per bale) were distributed along with other gifts. Barbeau explained (1929: 45) that Lelt wanted, on that occasion, to adopt his own son as his successor, contrary to matrilineal rules of succession, but the relatives of his mother's side would not approve and the attempt was abandoned.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. Eagle (Medzeks, a special eagle) with a frog facing upwards on its body.
2. Copper-Smell-Person (Isowq) in the shape of a human being holding two animals which might be white groundhogs *(mosgwilk)*, a family crest.
3. Climbing frog *(andeptoldekiganaao)*.
4. Canoe with three figures: top, Kewok, Nekt's father; middle, Nekt (these two are joined by Kewok's tongue); and bottom, Lutraisu, Nekt's mother.
5. Climbing frog *(andeptoldekiganao)*.
6. Half-Bear (Xpasmax).



126 Whereon-Climb-Frogs (pole 16) of Lelt, showing the infant warrior Nekt in the canoe with his mother and his father's head. The house in the background is that of Chief Hlengwah. (National Museums of Canada, 59695.)

127 Pole 16. Eagle (Medzeks) with frog. (National Museums of Canada, 68063.)

128 Pole 16. Copper-Smell-Person holding white groundhogs. (National Museums of Canada, 68060.)

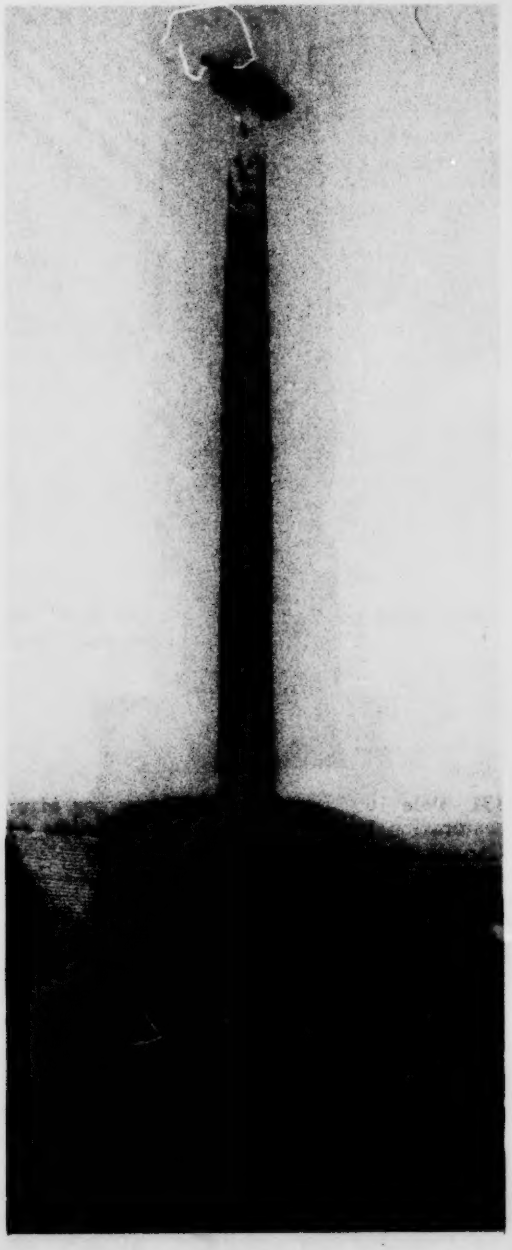
129 Pole 16. The first climbing frog. (National Museums of Canada, 68065.)

130 Pole 16. The canoe that brought Nekt and his mother from the Queen Charlotte Islands. Nekt is shown sucking the tongue from his father's severed head. (National Museums of Canada, 68050.)

131 Pole 16. The lower climbing frog after restoration in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68059.)

132 Pole 16. Half-Bear after restoration in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68058.)

133 Descendant of the warrior Nekt, Silas Brown in the grizzly-bear robe of his ancestor, standing before On-Which-Soars-Raven (pole 17). (National Museums of Canada, 62603.)



134 On-Which-Soars-Raven. (National Museums of Canada, 59690.)

On-Which-Soars-Raven
(No. 17)

On-Which-Soars-Raven (Gansil or Ksilemqaq) was erected by Hlengwah (Jim Laganitz, IV.A.1), Frog-Raven phratry, in 1919 in memory of Axgawt (Niesgamala), who was also of the Hlengwah clan. Smith stated (1926: Pole 17): "Neqt, a title held by Silas Brown at that time is also a branch of the house of Hlengwex." In Figure 133 Silas Brown is shown in his Nekt grizzly-bear costume standing before this pole.

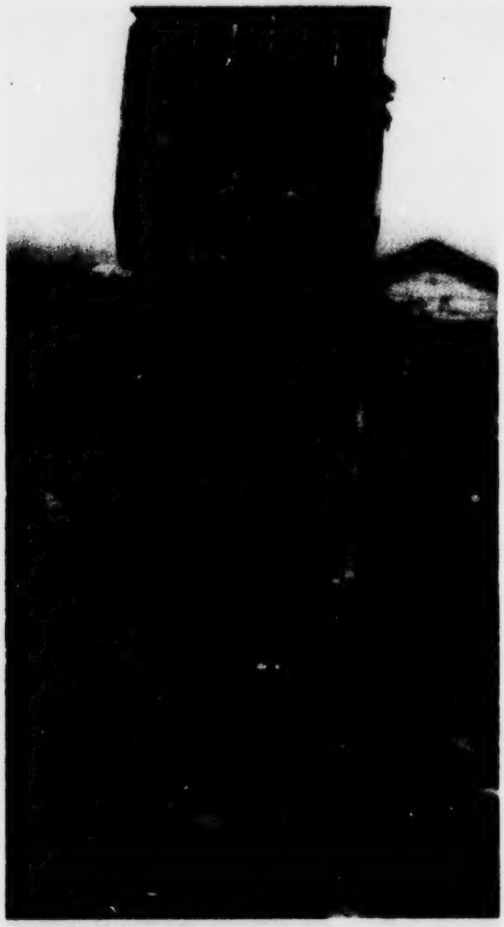
The pole, about 35 feet long, was carved by Haxpaqwawtu (IV.C.1) of the Fireweed phratry of Gitwangak (Duff 1949).

There are only two figures on the pole; they are; from the top:

1. On-Which-Soars-Raven (Gansil or Ksilemqaq) or what Barbeau calls "The first of the three Raven children."
2. Chief Axgawt. The figure is actually clothed. On its head and neck are rings of red cedar bark, symbolic of membership in a secret society. It also wears "the Sticky-blanket or Naeqt's grizzly-bear armour *(Kwisendedzaehl)*, a crest, and the copper slab under his arm is a pictorial reference to a *potlatch* ... in which [Axgawt] appeared with a valuable copper shield *(hayaets)* in his possession" (Barbeau 1929: 49).

This was the last pole erected in Gitwangak before the National Museums of Canada--Canadian National Railway restoration project of 1924-26 and it was not lowered for restoration so there are no good pictures of

135 Chief Hlengwah standing in front of On-Which-Soars-Raven. Many attachments have been added to the pole including a freshly cut tree, a bearskin robe, a copper shield, and cedar-bark head and neck rings of a secret society. (National Museums of Canada, 59763.)



136 Pole 17. The secret society cedar-bark rings captured from Kitimat by the warrior Nekt. (National Museums of Canada, 65548.)

137 Pole 17. The raven on top of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65554.)

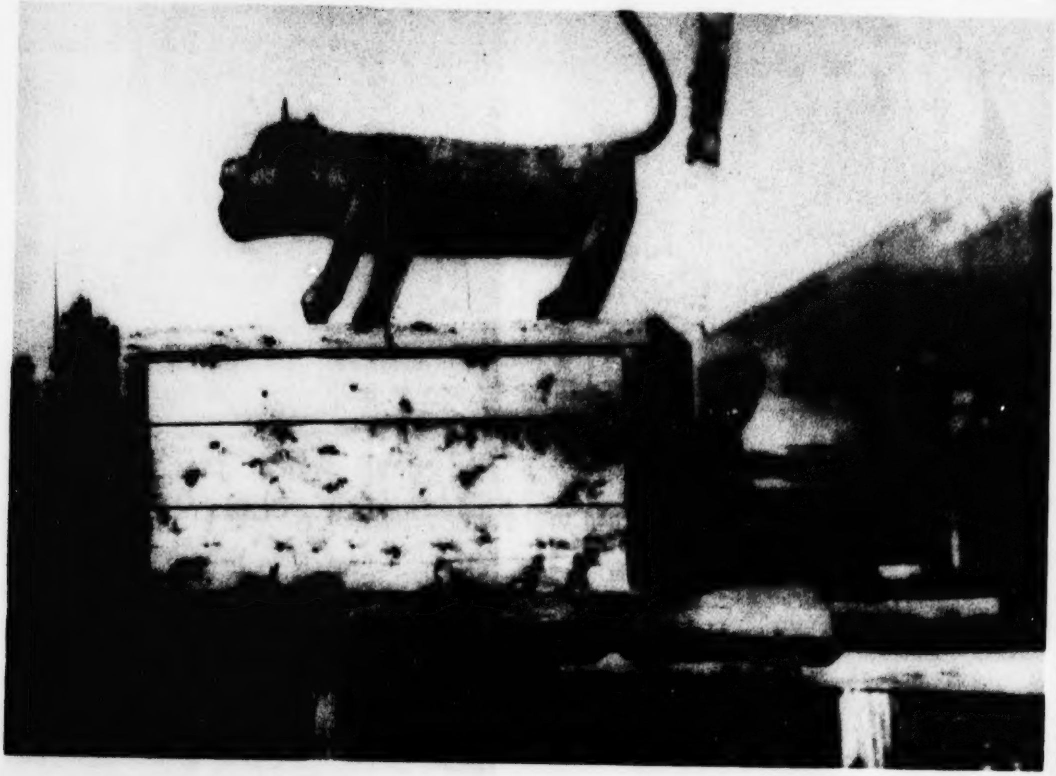
the raven on top. Smith described the treatment it was given (1926: Pole 17):

> This totem-pole below ground was cleaned and treated with creosote preservative and bedded in a hidden cement foundation under the direction of the director of the National Museums of Canada by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1925. It is to be treated with preservative above ground and repainted.

The pole was moved across the road after 1942 in line with the other poles. By that time it had lost all of its cedar-bark rings and garments and even the copper had been broken off. The raven from which the pole takes its name has also been lost. The pole was restored in 1969 and is in good condition despite the loss of its elaborate decorations.

138 Pole 17. The copper shield attached to the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65552.)

139 Pole 17 as repainted in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 68560.)



140 Monument of the mountain lion (No. 18) in 1910 shortly after it was erected. (National Museums of Canada, 71-5640.)

Monument of the Mountain Lion
(No. 18)

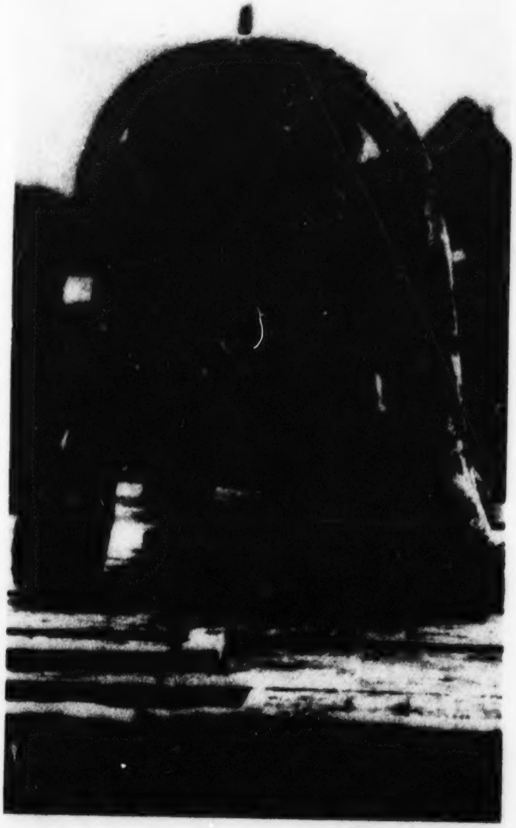
Another type of memorial is seen in the monument of the mountain lion that stood in the centre of Gitwangak. It was carved by Hlengwah (IV.A.1), Jim Laganitz, head chief of the Frog-Raven phratry of Gitwangak. The erection of the monument was undertaken by the Wolf phratry under the supervision of Charles Derrick and in memory of his predecessor, Chief Axti (No Fat on Him, IV.B.2a) of the same phratry.

According to Barbeau (1929: 132), the monument was put up about 1910, but a photograph taken of it in 1910 by Emmons (Fig. 140) shows that the paint has already washed off most of it. A more likely date for its erection would be about 1905.

The carving was restored by the project under Smith's direction (1926: Pole 18): "in 1925 the tail and ears were restored, the figure was repainted and a new platform built for it in Charles Derrick's yard, across the road from where it originally stood."

Smith further observed (1926: Pole 18) that "this is said to be the first mountain-lion ever carved by the Indians of Kitwanga." This is technically correct since the much older mountain lion (circa 1865) on pole 5 was the work of a Kitwancool carver. However, since the posts seen supporting the monument in Figure 140 are very old and weathered in appearance, I think the carving by Hlengwah was a replacement of a much older one that could have predated the 1865 example.

This type of monument is not common in Gitksan villages, but examples are to be found in Kitselas (Allaire, MacDonald and Inglis 1979: Pl. 34, centre), at Kispiox (Barbeau 1929: Pl. 17, Fig. 3; Pl. 19, Figs. 2-3), and at Gitsegukla. They appear to be of the "cache" type of grave box used throughout the north coast tribes to contain the bones or ashes of the chief. There is no indication that this particular example was used for the cremated remains of Axti, although the original monument may have been used so. A similar funeral monument at Gitwangak is provided by No. 32.



141 The face of the mountain lion in 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 65171.)

The story of the mountain lion, a crest obtained when a former Axti slew the monster that was marauding the villages of the Skeena River, is given in the text for pole 5.

Man-crushing Log
(Tongue-licked [Nekt] II)
(No. 19)

This Man-crushing Log (Kanuget) was erected a little before 1905 (Smith 1926: Pole 19) by Jim Laganitz (Hlengwah), head chief of the Frog-Raven phratry of Gitwangak. (See also Nekt poles, Nos. 20 and 21.) It honoured his uncle, a former chief Hlengwah. Approximately 37 feet long, it was carved by Tom Campbell, whose Gitksan name was Kaldihget or Lutkudzeus, of the Frog-Raven phratry of Hazelton. This is another case in which the principal carver was of the same phratry as the owner.

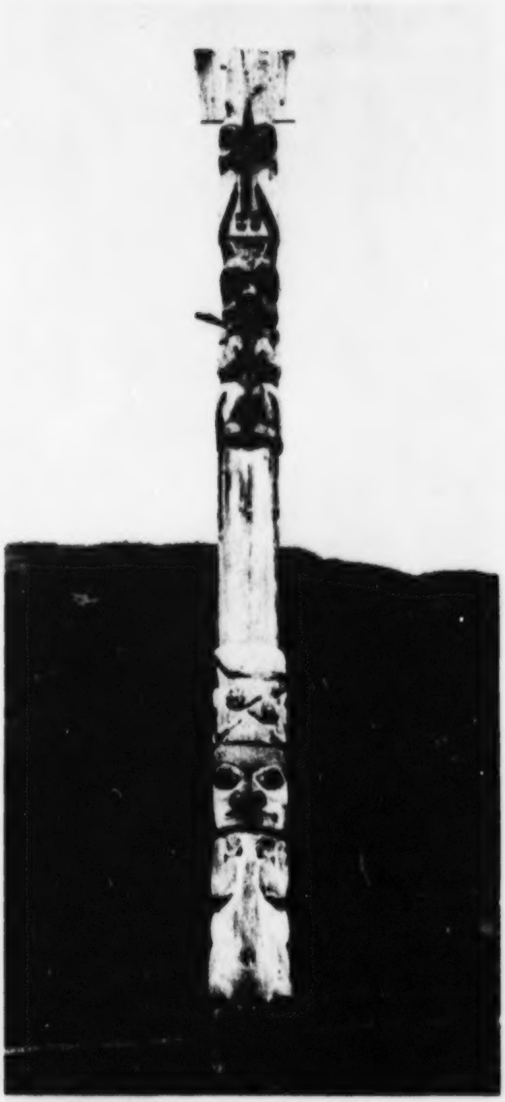
The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

1. The trap door *(ptaw)* of the Taawdzep. When first erected it was decorated with four clusters of dried deer hooves on strings. These rattled if an intruder touched the door, warning the inhabitants of the fort of danger.
2. Giludal (thunderbird).
3. Nekt (Tongue-licked). The warrior of the Taawdzep in his magical grizzly-bear armour. His disguise is almost complete and he appears as a grizzly bear except that his hands are human in order to grasp the Strike-Only-Once club (Gelaxt).
4. Man-crushing Log (Kanuget), which formed the major defence of the Taawdzep.
5. Two Kitimat warriors which represent enemies killed by the rolling log.
6. Whole-Being (Maxkyawl).
7. Flying frog *(gepigemganao)*.

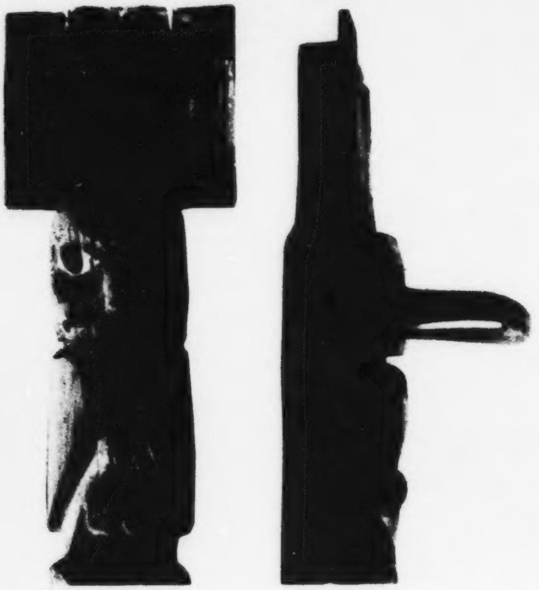
The trap door was claimed as an exclusive device of the Kitwanga Taawdzep, but in fact is to be found in the defences of at least six other forts of the northern coast of British Columbia. The deer hooves which adorned it were also commonly used as a warning system on numerous other forts.

Giludal is the supernatural bird crest that Nekt captured from the wall of an enemy house in Kitimat. Although it was an Eagle phratry crest, Nekt kept it, but had to call it something other than "thunderbird" (Barbeau 1929: 51).

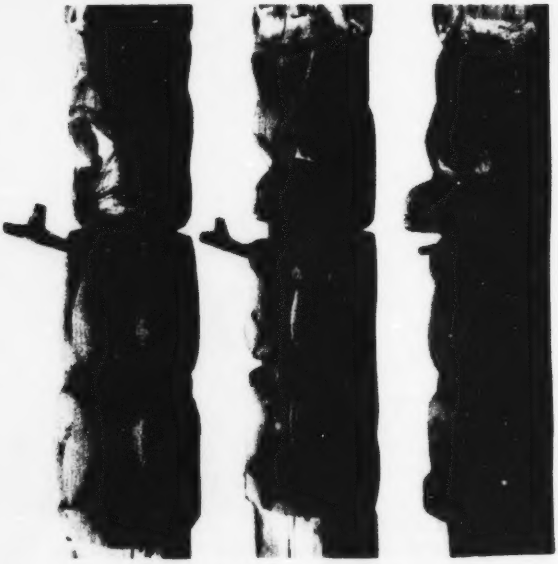
The figure of Nekt himself is customarily portrayed as the grizzly bear from which he took the hide, early in his career, to make the suit of magical armour. Some accounts state that Nekt made only a small incision in the



142 Man-crushing Log (Tongue-licked [Nekt] II; pole 19) portrays the defences of the Kitwanga fort and the warrior Nekt and his trophies. (Public Archives Canada, 95505.)



143 Pole 19. Front and profile views of the trap door to the Kitwanga fort and the thunderbird crest captured at Kitimat by Nekt. The profile shows the long, recarved beak of the bird. (National Museums of Canada, 64320 and 64299.)



144 Pole 19. Views of the warrior Nekt in his grizzly-bear disguise and holding the magical club Strike-Only-Once. (National Museums of Canada, 64306, 64302 and 64304.)

145 Figures of the dead Kitimat warriors on Man-crushing Log in the summer of 1979. (Photo by V. Jensen.)

146 Pole 19. Whole-Being standing on the flying frog at the base of the pole. (National Museums of Canada, 65141.)

bear's belly while skinning it so that the skin would be a convincing decoy.

Some informants claimed there were three crushing logs around the Taawdzep, one over the main entrance and one on each side of it. They were held on top of the palisades by ropes which were severed by cuts from adzes when a special war horn was blown. Many other forts were known to have rolling-log defences. This one is unique in that the log is square. H.I. Smith (1926) identified the two human figures as Kitimat warriors who were symbolic of those killed on a retaliatory attack on the Taawdzep for Nekt's raid on their village. The Emmons notes (1909-10) identify them as two Haidas.

Whole-Being is a Frog-Raven crest (see text for pole 13).

The flying frog at the base is the one Nekt (then Naskibu) caught in Kitwancool Lake. It

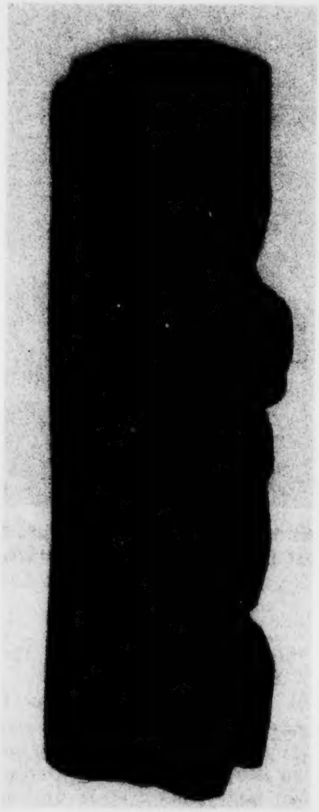
147 Pole 19. The flying frog at the base of the pole. The attached head emphasizes the figure's horizontal orientation. (National Museums of Canada, 65148.)

148 Pole 19. Back view of the flying frog showing the full, round carving. (National Museums of Canada, 65146.)

is unusual in that it is a horizontal figure on which the head extends beyond the pole. It is analogous to many of the argillite poles from the Queen Charlotte Islands which have horizontal images of frogs at the bases. In the Gitksan legend of the flying frog (Barbeau 1929: 43), a pole on which frogs climb emerges from the primal lake. The fact they are flying frogs makes them the ultimate symbols of the cosmic zones of water, earth and air, just as the cormorant or earth diver is favoured in the role of cosmic creator. On some Gitwangak poles, frogs climb on the pole (poles 3, 4 and 15) while in others (poles 2 and 19) the pole is supported on the back of the frog.

The Man-crushing Log of Hlengwah started to lean badly a decade or so after its erection and was noted by Harlan I. Smith as in immediate need of stabilization and re-erection. This was done in 1925. The pole ultimately fell sometime in the thirties. Leonard Bright of Gitwangak said it was cut down to save it from a fire, possibly in the forties. It now lies in a field opposite the row of standing poles.

149 Man-crushing Log as it appears today. It is the most important surviving artifact commemorating the history of the Kitwanga fort. (Photo by V. Jensen.)



150 Tongue-licked (Ne*k*t) I (pole 20) showing the warrior dressed in his grizzly-bear armour, as preserved at the National Museum of Man, Ottawa. (Photo by G. MacDonald.)

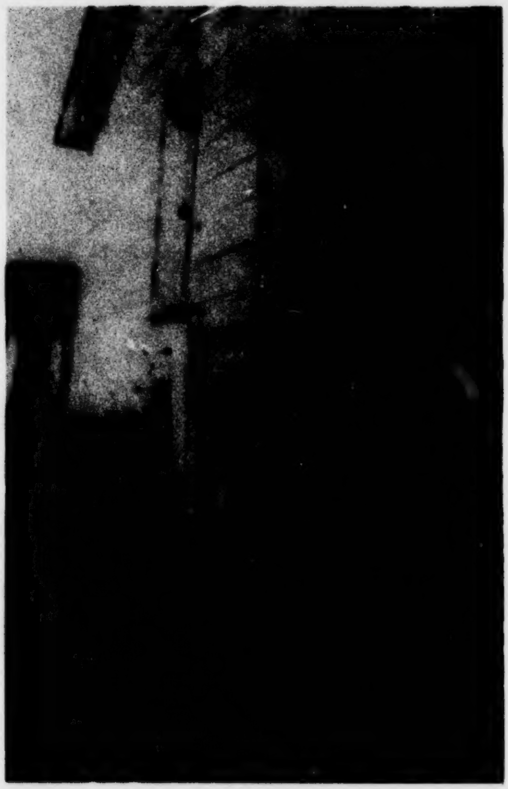
Tongue-Licked (Nekt) I
(No. 20)

Tongue-licked (Nekt) is the original pole depicting the warrior Nekt dressed in his invincible suit of grizzly-bear armour. It was carved by Yaxyaq of Kitwancool. The pole was erected probably about 1850 and had fallen before 1900. Only one figure from the pole survives. Barbeau stated (1929: 50) that "before the pole was cut, it was quite a long one; but we could not obtain a detailed description of its figures."

The surviving figure is the base of the pole; the top figure was Whole-Being (Maxkyawl). Other figures on the pole were Giludal; Fog-Person (Ganaumget); and frog *(ganao)* (Canada. National Museums. National Museum of Man. Canadian Ethnology Service, specimen documentation, VII.C.1172).

Barbeau considered (1929: 55) that "the fragment of the old Naeqt pole, now preserved at the National Museum of Man, is artistically the most valuable and it belongs to the best period of Skeena River sculpture."

The preserved figure from the pole has a particular significance to the history of the Kitwanga fort. When it fell, a feast was given and Jim Laganitz (Hlengwah, IV.A.l) stood on top of this figure of Nekt in his bear costume as he "made himself a chief *(o'yerh)*" (Barbeau 1929: 54), and assumed the name Laganitz. After the feast, Jim Laganitz stood the figure from the pole next to the front door of his house (Fig. 151).



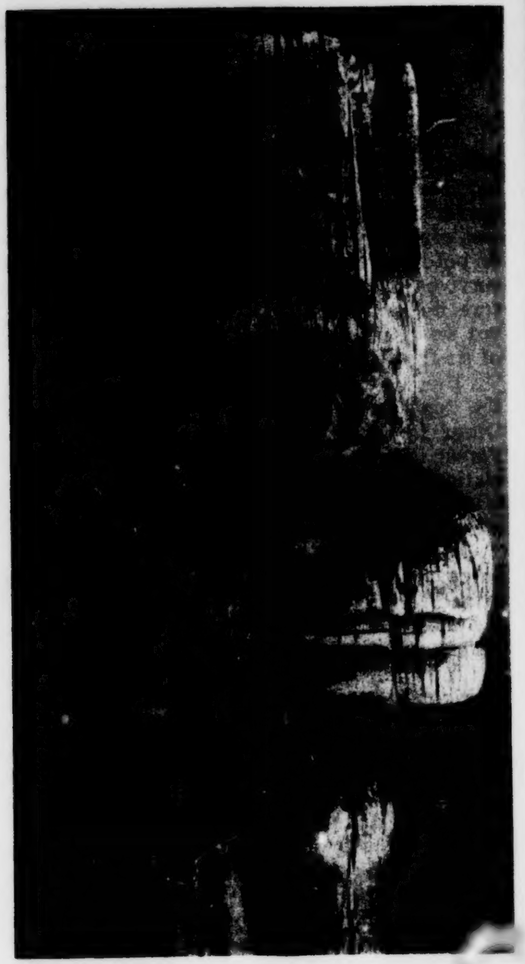
151 The bottom section of pole 20 as it stood in front of Hlengwah's house before 1926. (National Museums of Canada, 59692.)

Barbeau purchased the piece and added it to the collection of the National Museum of Canada about 1926 (specimen VII.C.1172). The base of the pole was very decayed, but the entire pole has recently been conserved with carbo-wax and is now in stable condition. Several features of the pole are worth noting. The first is that the pupils of the eyes of the bear-like figure have been recessed to receive an inlay. One pupil has a square nail in the centre which suggests the inlay was of metal, most likely copper; however, other possibilities are abalone shell or glazed china. Inlays of this size are very rare in Gitksan totem poles.

A second feature of note is the hands. They are not bear-like but entirely human in the details of the thumb and fingers (Fig. 152). The right hand holds the magical club, Strike-Only-Once, of the warrior Nekt. Of this only the handle grasped by the figure remains.

Finally, there is the figure of a frog with its face appearing between the large erect ears of the bear and its legs in the interior of the ear forms (Fig. 154). The face of the frog is split into two profiles by a channel carved down the centre.

152 Pole 20. Inside of Nekt's right hand, holding Strike-Only-Once. (Photo by G. MacDonald.)



153 Pole 20. Outside of Nekt's right hand, recessed to receive the separately carved club. (Photo by G. MacDonald.)

154 Pole 20. Frog face between the bear's ears. (Photo by G. MacDonald.)

155 Pole 20. Iris of the bear's eyes are recessed to receive decorative inlays. (Photo by G. MacDonald.)

Tongue-Licked (Nekt) III
(No. 21)

A third generation of the Tongue-licked pole of Nekt was raised during the 1942 potlatch. It was the last of several poles to be raised in Gitwangak that year. In terms of execution, it documents clearly the deterioration of the art of totem pole carving in the past century in this area. The small figure of the frog can just be seen at the base of the pole (Fig. 156). The figure of Nekt in the suit of the grizzly-bear armour is particularly poor; nevertheless, he still holds his magical club.

There are four crushed warriors on the new pole, two more than on the original. The log rollers are round in the latest version rather than square. At the top of the pole is the Giludal bird, but there is no trap door at the top, nor is there the human figure that was on the preceding pole.

Although this pole is of little artistic merit and warrants no further description, it is most significant that photographic evidence exists for three generations of the same pole erected over the better part of a century. It is ironic that of the three versions of the Tongue-licked pole, it is the most recent one that has vanished without a trace. The earliest version (No. 20) survives as a fragment in the National Museum of Man collection and the intermediate one (No. 19) lies in the grass at Gitwangak today. The third version of the pole was burned down in a fire about 1951, presumably the same fire that burned Hlengwah's house.

156 Tongue-licked (Nekt) III (pole 21) is another version of the Nekt pole with the same crests as pole 19 (Tongue-licked [Nekt] II) except that the trap-door crest is missing from the top. The figure of the warrior Nekt, second from the bottom, is unique in displaying both his human and grizzly-bear faces. This pole was destroyed in a fire about 1951. (Photo by Wilson Duff, 1949; courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN8594.)

The House Posts of Hlengwah
(Nos. 22-25)

Hlengwah was the head Frog-Raven chief at the Kitwanga fortress. Jim Laganitz, who held this name at the time of the preservation project of 1924-26, owned the last traditional-style house at Gitwangak Village.

The four corner posts of the house were carved with the crests associated with the fort and the warrior Nekt. Fortunately, the interior of this house is well recorded, both in text and photographs. The interior of the house is plain, as shown in Figure 158. Inside, the arrangement is very traditional. A rectangular opening in the centre of the heavy plank floor has been left for the fireplace, and directly over it is a large smoke hole. Two large log beams run lengthwise down the house; however, they are more decorative than functional as the ends of the beams are carried on blocks that are supported by a pair of square framing timbers on the front wall. Between each pair of timbers is a window. The house posts and beams do not continue to the back wall of the house, but stop about 15 feet short of it (Fig. 160). This was probably the living compartment of the chief's family. When the house was converted from secular to ritual use, during ceremonies, painted canvas or cotton screens may have been suspended from the beam that crosses the house at this point to provide an area where the dancers could dress and prepare for their performance.

Unfortunately, no photographs show the house in an occupied condition, so little can be said about domestic arrangements. Photo-

157 Hlengwah's house as it looked about 1950, just before it burned to the ground. The Axgawt pole (No. 17, On-Which-Soars-Raven) that stands in front was damaged in the same fire but survives. (Photo by Wilson Duff, Historical Photography Collection, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle.)

158 The interior of Hlengwah's house, showing the carved house posts near the front door. On the right is the Kitimat warrior and on the left is Whole-Being. The large smoke hole in the centre of the roof is directly over the hearth opening in the floor as in traditional Gitksan houses. (National Museums of Canada, 67980.)

159 The hearth area of Hlengwah's house, showing the drying rack in place and many storage boxes along the walls. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1926; National Museums of Canada, 71-4429.)

graphs taken by Harlan I. Smith in 1926 show the house used as a storage shed. There are piles of lumber, stacks of shingles and rounds of firewood all over the floor. The central fireplace has not been used in a very long time and even the woodstove lies disconnected and covered. From the condition of the wood in the floor planks, siding beams, et cetera, it appears that the house is between 25 and 40 years old. The most probable time for its erection would have been around 1885, when Hlengwah would have been about 35 years old and had just assumed his title.

Later photographs from the Historical Photography Collection, in the University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, probably taken in the mid-thirties, show the house as a derelict structure with many broken windows and with most of the shingles missing from the back section of the roof. The floor is strewn with wooden boxes and chests that once held the prized possessions of the family.

Although it is clear that the structure was originally built as a communal dwelling for Hlengwah's extended family, it may not have served long in that capacity. Harlan I. Smith reported (1928: 82) that this house was opened by Jim Laganitz as a museum in 1926:

> Its large size, its fireplace, smoke-hole, and two large ridge poles with four

160 The interior of Hlengwah's house with the frog house post on right and the Putting-a-Soul-on-Oneself house post to the left. These house posts were cosmetic rather than structural in function. The roof beams were said to be over a century old. (Photo by Viola Garfield, ca. 1935; Historical Photography Collection, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle.)

carved house posts supporting them, are typically Indian features, although the pitch of the roof, the shakes, the lumber, the doors, and the windows are modern in character. Inside are a large number of excellent old Gitksan specimens. Visitors have expressed the opinion that this building should be preserved, because, among all the Indian houses in this part of the country, it perhaps approaches nearest to the old aboriginal type. During the lifetime of its owner it is probably fairly safe from fire, but after his death measures might be taken to secure its preservation.

No measures were taken and the house burned down about 1949.

Two pairs of carved house posts are placed under the beams at each end of the house. Their roles are entirely decorative as they would not be capable of supporting massive beams of this size on their own.

The interior poles provide the only known decoration inside the house. They were carved by Chief Gwaslam (III.B.5) of the Wolf phratry of Kitwancool.

Frog
(No. 22)

At the back of the house, the pole on the right depicts a frog, the crest of the Frog-Raven phratry.

161 The frog house post displays the light and dark spots associated with the crest. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1926; National Museums of Canada, 67981.)

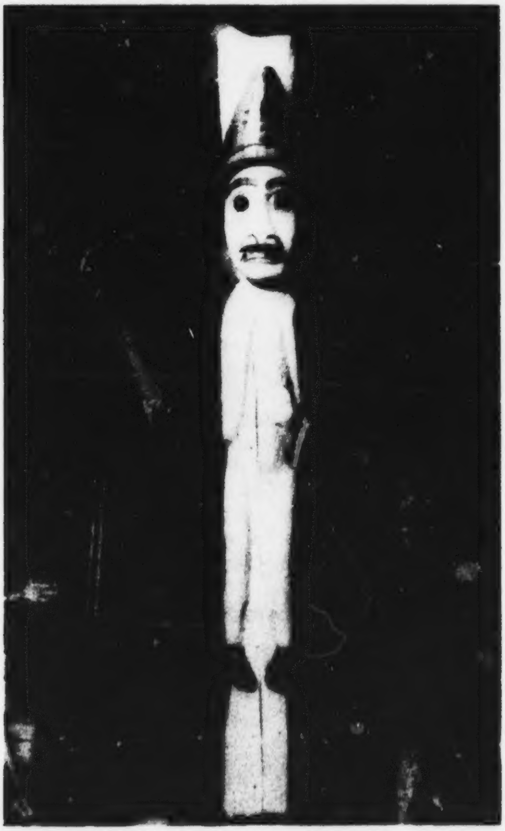
Putting-a-Soul-on-Oneself
(No. 23)

The pole on the left at the back of the house uses a human crest called "Putting-a-Soul-on-Oneself" (Kuksawdzuntx), which depicts a man in a shaman's crown of grizzly-bear claws, holding his own spirit in his hands and trying to put it in himself (Halpin 1973: 89). Illness in Gitksan society was attributed to soul loss, so that the main activity of the curing shaman *(swanasu halait)* was the recovery and re-insertion of the soul into the patient's body. It is unusual to have the clear identification that exists in this case that a human soul is depicted as a human face; however, this principle is implicit throughout Northwest Coast art.

162 Putting-a-Soul-on-Oneself house post in Hlengwah's house, a carving of a shaman holding his own spirit in his hands and trying to put it in himself (see Halpin 1973: App. II). (Photo by Viola Garfield, ca. 1935; Historical Photography Collection, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle.)

Kitimat Warrior
(No. 24)

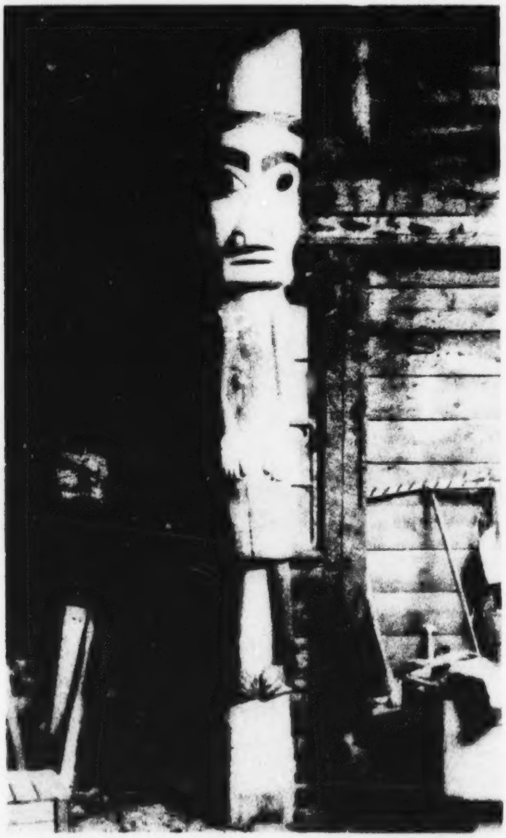
At the front of the house, the house post on the right depicts one of the Kitimat warriors slain by Nekt. The warrior wears a conical hat called "Made-of-Sticks" (Hagwudul); similar figures that have been killed by the log rollers of the Kitwanga fort are shown on poles 13 and 19.



163 The house post of the Kitimat warrior wearing the distinctive conical basket hat of that tribe. The huge brackets supporting the roof beam on the front wall sill are unique and probably result from the attempt to accommodate Indian and white styles of framing a building. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1926; courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN8992.)

Whole-Being
(No. 25)

On the left side at the front, the carved house post depicts Whole-Being (Maxkyawl), the crest that probably originated on the Nass.



164 Whole-Being house post. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1926; National Museums of Canada, 71-4422.)

New Whereon-Climb-Frogs
(No. 26)

The new Whereon-Climb-Frogs was erected in front of Mrs. Jackson's house, where the crab monument (No. 29) also stood, about 1940. It is not recorded who raised the pole nor whom it commemorated.

The figures on the pole, from the top, are:

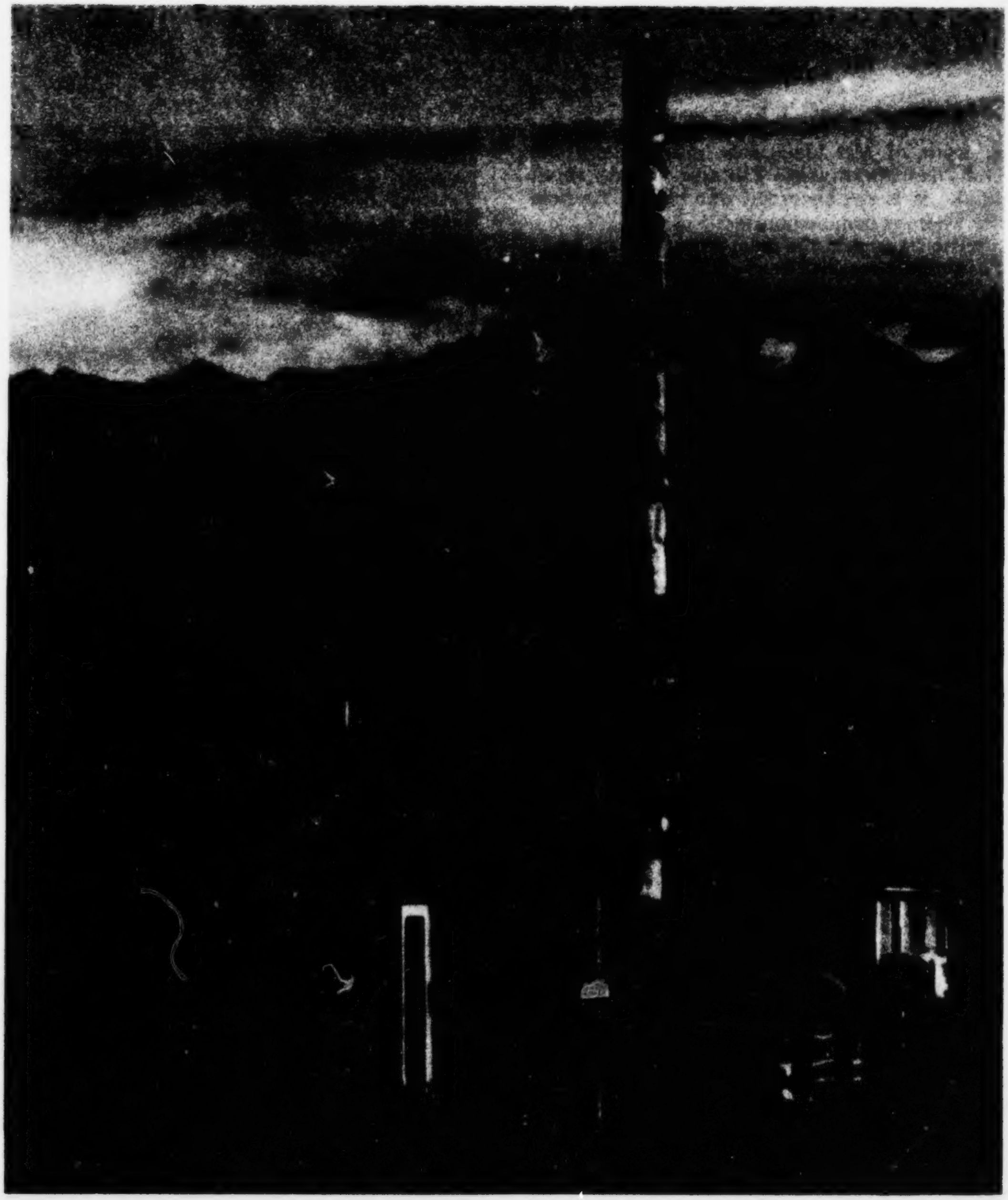
1. A chief, possibly Nekt.
2. Man-in-the-Copper-Shield (Getemhayets).
3. Eagle (Medzeks).
4. Canoe with the figures of Nekt, his mother, and his father's head.
5. Frog *(ganao)*.
6. Half-Bear (Xpasmax).

From the photographs, this pole is obviously another version of one of the Nekt poles, very similar to the other Whereon-Climb-Frogs (pole 16). The Medzeks or eagle has been placed lower on this version, and the topmost figure appears to be a chief, possibly Nekt, wearing a conical hat with a frog crest on top. The Man-in-the-Copper-Shield in the centre of the pole is similar to that on one (No. 3) of the poles of that name at the end of the village.

One other distinctive feature of this pole is that the canoe with Nekt, his mother, and his father's head has been added to the pole as a separate carving. The figure of the frog, second from the bottom, heads down the pole in contrast to the one on pole 16. Half-Bear at the bottom is basically unchanged from that on pole 16.

This pole was destroyed by fire in the early 1950s.

165 The new Whereon-Climb-Frogs (pole 26). (Courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN8378.)

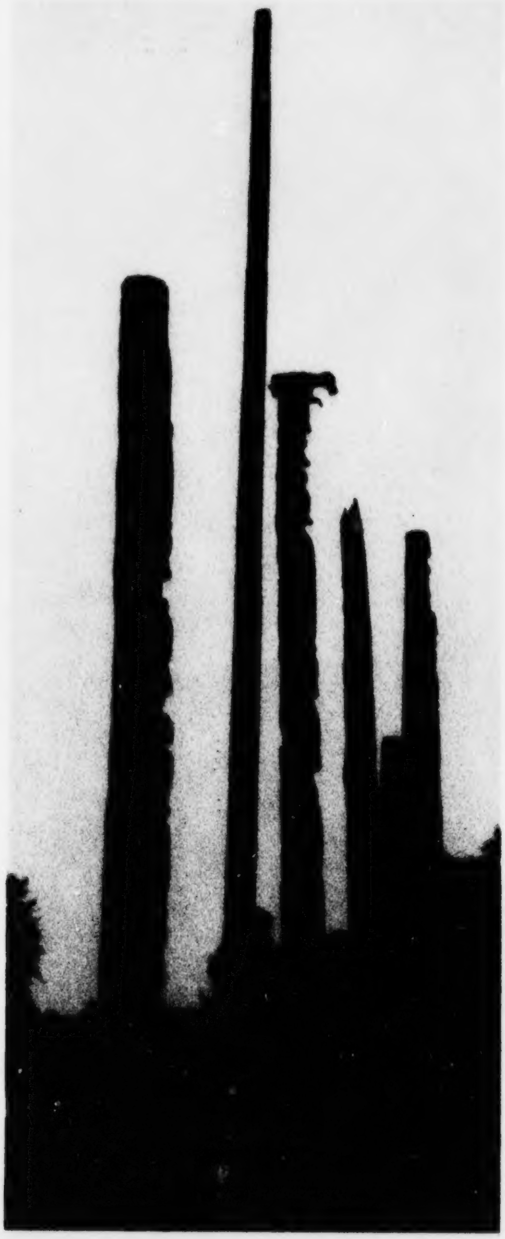


166 This Whereon-Climb-Frogs, which stood for only a brief time, may have been a copy of the Whereon-Climb-Frogs of Lelt (pole 16) since basically identical crests have been used on it. (Circa 1947; Tourism British Columbia, 3779N.)

Bear Mother
(No. 27)

In the early 1940s, perhaps at the potlatch of 1942, a tall but relatively plain pole was erected in the row of poles in the centre of Gitwangak. The position of this new pole between Ensnared Bear (pole 6) and Pole of the Wolf (pole 7) suggests that pole 27 also belonged to the family of Hlawts of the Wolf phratry of Gitwangak.

The carving on the pole is much cruder than on the older poles which flank it, but it is typical of those produced during the 1940s. When erected, a small, separate carving of a bear cub peered down from the top of the long squared shaft, but it has since fallen off. A second separate carving of a bear cub is still attached to the pole just above the head of the Bear Mother. This last figure at the base of the pole shows the long facial proportions and the shallowly carved arms and legs characteristic of the period when it was erected.

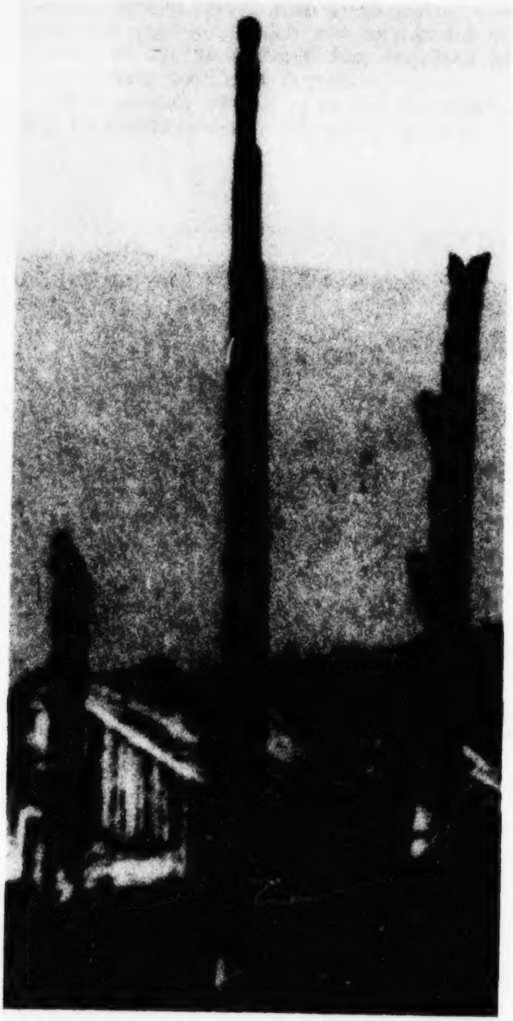


167 Bear Mother (pole 27), the tallest pole in the photo, was one of the most recent erected at Gitwangak. (1977; Tourism British Columbia, G 36487.)

Bear's Den
(No. 28)

The only evidence for the Bear's Den pole is provided by a photograph taken by J. O'Dwyer of the village in 1897 during a survey for the Department of Transport. It is an amazingly good photograph considering that it was taken from the middle of the river, which was difficult with the slow equipment available at that time. There is sufficient evidence in the photograph to allow an accurate recarving of the pole to be undertaken.

At the top of the pole was a standing human figure that probably represented Qawq (IV.D.l) of the Eagle phratry, a title now borne by Semedik (IV.D.1a). The rest of the long pole was plain except for two round holes in the lower half of the pole which represented the bear's dens.



168 Bear's Den (pole 28) is in the centre of this blow-up from the only known photograph taken while it was standing. (Photo by J. O'Dwyer, 1899; Public Archives Canada, 83119.)

Monument of the Crab
(No. 29)

The crab monument was related to the crab crest adopted by Chief Haimas after his rivalry feast for Chief Legaic of Port Simpson. Legaic gave a feast for which the young Haimas was very late because he was on the beach collecting crabs. Legaic ridiculed him severely. When it was his turn to feast Legaic, Haimas served crab shells stuffed with mountain goat fat, which was considered the richest of all foods, and thus regained his status among the Coast Tsimshian.

This version of the crab had articulated legs that were probably controlled by cords.

169 The monument of the crab (No. 29). (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1926; National Museums of Canada, 70422.)

Monument to Kitwinkul Jim (Kamalmuk)
(No. 30)

The pyramidal monument on the left in Figure 170 is the grave house of Kitwinkul Jim, Kamalmuk (Barbeau 1973: 68-152), who was a central figure in the Skeena River Rebellion of 1886 and who was shot at Gitwangak the same year.

170 The pyramidal monument to Kitwinkul Jim (No. 30). (Photo by C.M. Barbeau, 1924; National Museums of Canada, 62446.)

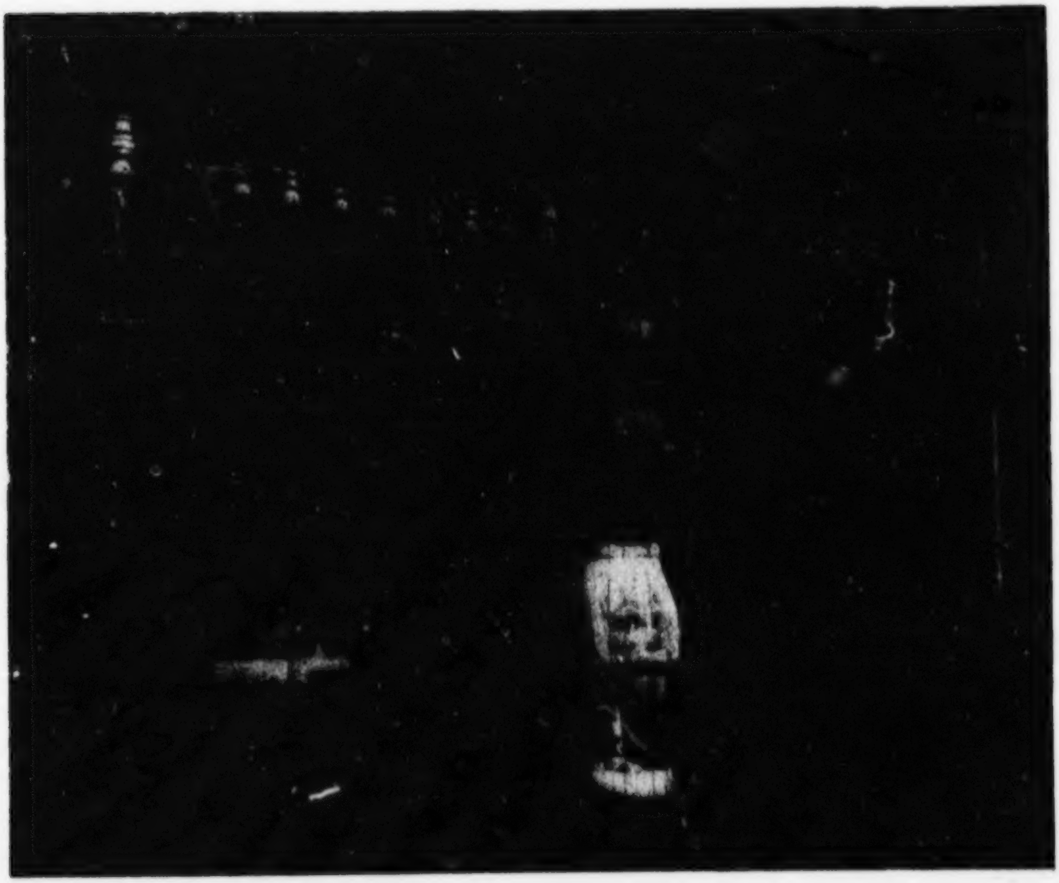
Monument to John Laganitz
(No. 31)

A large carved figure about six feet high commemorates John Laganitz of the Wolf phratry of Kitwancool. The figure wears a dance apron and holds an eagle in his hands.

The inscription reads:

John Laknitz
Dead, Aug. 5, 1926.

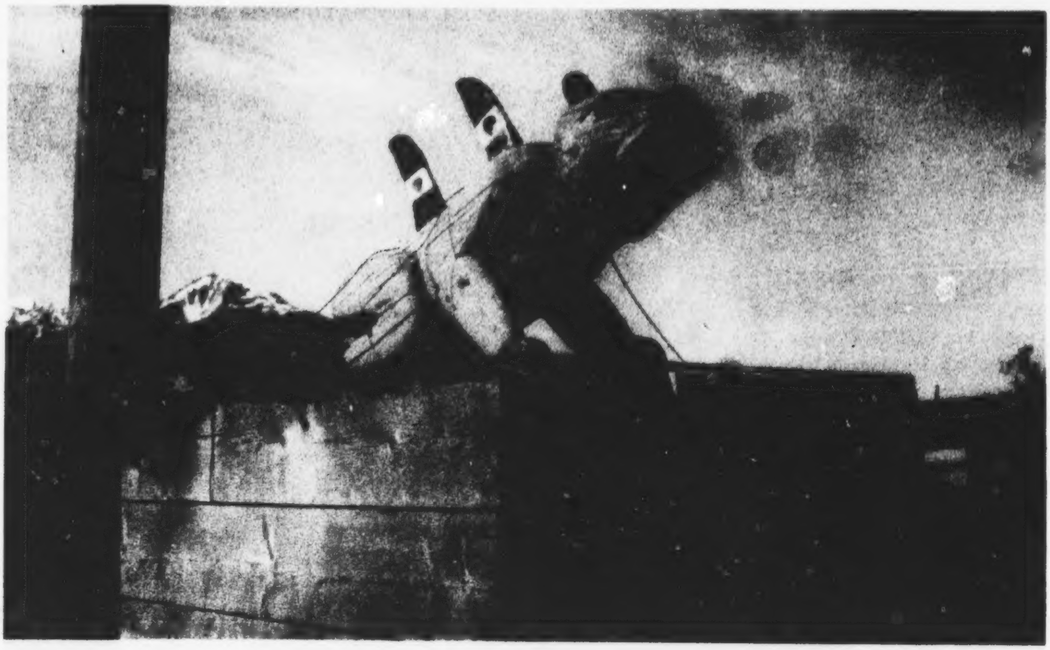
The carving stands in the Gitwangak cemetery on the north side of the Canadian National Railway tracks near the newly opened band council offices. The structure behind the carving is a false front that forms a part of an enclosure wall around the graves of John Laganitz and other family members.



171 Monument to John Laganitz (No. 31).
(Tourism British Columbia, 3723.)

Monument to Ne-tzees-an-awask, Susan Ne-yas-ha-lon-passt and Amelia Ne.aweh
(No. 32)

This carved memorial was erected in the 1940s to commemorate three individuals: Ne-tzees-an-awask, Susan Ne-yas-ha-lon-passt and Amelia Ne.aweh. It depicts the mythological creature called Medik, the Supernatural Grizzly Bear of the Skeena River. Consequently, it has both the features of a grizzly and the two dorsal fins of the Supernatural Killer Whale. It is very similar to a Medik monument at Gitsegukla which still survives but, unfortunately, the Gitwangak version has disappeared. It is interesting to note that the use of box-like platforms with large carved crest figures has survived at Gitwangak to the recent past.



172 Monument to Ne-tzees-an-awask, Susan Ne-yas-ha-lon-passt and Amelia Ne.aweh (No. 32). (Courtesy of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN8566.)

Monument of the Flying Frog
(No. 33)

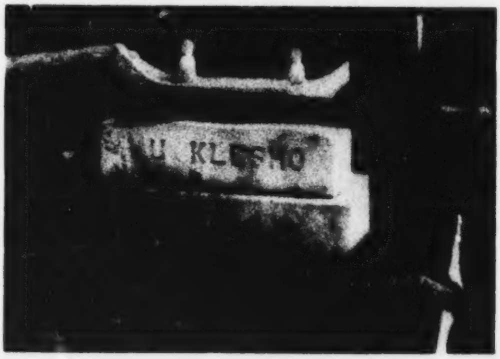
The flying-frog marble grave marker, in honour of Wudahayets, who died in March 1912 at the age of 70 years, was carved in Victoria or Vancouver from a helmet that was based on the Nekt crest of the flying frog. It was common to send wooden crest figures to monument works to have them translated into marble. The finished product here was much more faithful to the wooden original than is usually the case.

It stood on a wooden platform as did the traditional wooden monuments such as Nos. 18 and 31. There were two almost identical wooden versions of the helmet, undoubtedly from the hand of the same artist. The Gitwangak helmet was photographed by Emmons about 1910; the Kitwancool version, worn by its owner Chief Halus, in 1925 by Barbeau (J. MacDonald 1980: Fig. 5). The Kitwancool version is now in the collection of the National Museum of Man. The present location of the monument is uncertain.

173 The monument of the flying frog (No. 33). (National Museums of Canada, 59815.)

Monument to Lutraisu and Nekt
(No. 34)

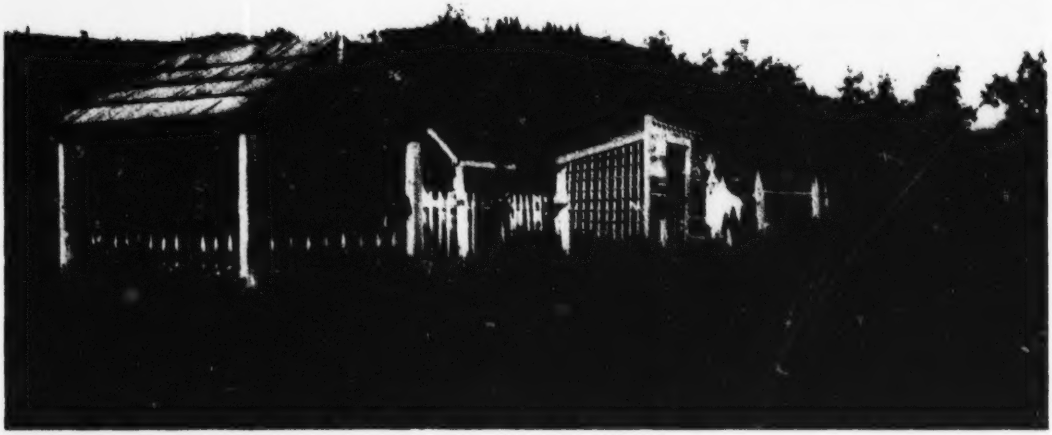
A marble monument was ordered from the coast to commemorate in more permanent form the crest of the canoe that brought Nekt and his mother from the Queen Charlotte Islands. Marble versions were carved by tombstone makers at Port Simpson and Victoria from wooden models provided by native carvers.



174 The marble monument to Lutraisu and her son Nekt as first erected with the figures of Lutraisu and Nekt, complete with Kewok's head in the bow of the canoe. (Photo by H.I. Smith, 1915; National Museums of Canada, 34075.)

175 The monument, with the figure of Nekt missing, after restoration by the National Museum team in 1926. Today all of the figures are missing. (National Museums of Canada, 68559.)

Many grave houses were scattered throughout the village and in several cemetery areas at Gitwangak. The ownership of many is recorded and the architectural details of dozens of structures are captured in photographs taken over the years.



176 Four grave houses at Gitwangak in 1918. (Photo by Louis Shotridge; The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 14945.)

Appendix A
Gitwangak (Gitksan Village IV) Houses and Phratries

A
Frog-Raven
(Ganhada)

1. Hlengwah
   (a) Nekt
2. Axgawt
3. Halus
4. Lelt
5. Haku
6. Halaist or Thaku
   (a) Negwetsegel
7. Wawdux
8. Lulaq
9. Nisalaq

B
Wolf
(Laxkibu)

1. Hlawts
2. Tenamget
   (a) Axti

C
Fireweed
(Gisgast)

1. Haxpagwawtu

D
Eagle
(Laxskik)

1. Qawq
   (a) Semedik
2. Sqayen
3. Tewalas
4. Gilawaw

(After Cove: 1978.)

Barbeau 1929 and a recent listing of Gitwangak houses by band members do not indicate that the Fireweed phratry was ever part of Gitwangak; however, unpublished secondary data do suggest that it may have been associated with Gitwangak at one time.

It is unclear from the ethnographic record whether the houses indicated above by the letter "a" were separate houses or were cadet houses. If the latter, each would be considered as part of the major house (i.e., the cadet house of Nekt would belong to the house of Hlengwah).

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Canada. National Museums. National Museum of Man. Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. Marius Barbeau Collection.
B-F-54.6 Lagaxnitx [Hlengwah] own potlatches (full account).

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The Gitksan Indian village of Gitwangak is the best-documented totem village on the Northwest Coast. The village lies on the bank of the Skeena River in northern British Columbia, near the hilltop site of a Gitksan fort that was destroyed in the 1830s. The totem poles, erected between 1840 and 1942, are a surviving set of artifacts that record, in a unique way, the history of the Kitwanga fort and the families that occupied it.

Canada